

WORKERS FEELING THE
SQUEEZE
THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS
>>Pages 10&11



FIFTY YEARS SINCE
BLOODY SUNDAY
MASSACRE IN DERRY
>>Pages 14&15

Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2789 | 26 January - 1 February 2022 | socialistworker.co.uk

LOCKDOWN PARTIES ● RACISM AND
ISLAMOPHOBIA ● BLACKMAILING MPs

TORIES ARE ROTTEN TO THE CORE



The Tory crisis—and how we can take full advantage of it >>Pages 2, 3, 5 and 6

IMPERIALISM

US and Russia
drive Ukraine to
brink of war

SABRE RATTLING between the US and Russia has brought Ukraine to the brink of war for the second time in less than a decade.

In Britain socialists should build opposition to the US and British states beating the drums of war—and fight the system of imperialist rivalry that produces it.

>>Pages 15 and 20

HEALTH



**Mandatory jab is
Tory attempt to
deflect blame**

A STAGGERING 73,000 NHS workers could lose their jobs under new rules demanding all health staff in England that have “direct contact with patients” are double jabbed.

Health workers tell Socialist Worker why they're for the vaccine but against the mandate.

>>Pages 4&5

PALESTINE

Israeli land grabs
fuel resistance in
Palestine

FROM THE streets of Jerusalem to the desert of the Naqab, Israel's drive to snatch Palestinian land is sparking new battles.

And in Britain over 500 people rallied at short notice outside the Israeli embassy last week.

>>Page 7



Whips pressure MPs

The whips 'killed six people'

THE SCANDALS at Westminster have shone a light on the role of the whips. These are MPs who act as enforcers for the party leaders.

For them, any breath of scandal or inappropriate conduct is useful to pressure MPs to toe the party line.

In 1993 Tory prime minister John Major was desperate to force through support for the European Union's Maastricht treaty. In a series of knife-edge votes several Tories threatened to rebel.

One Tory said about the whips, "They kept phoning my wife and saying, 'You should tell him to vote with the government'."

"With some it was affairs, or things like visits to gay nightclubs. It didn't matter if it wasn't true, or was gossip, they still tried it on."

During the Tony Blair governments, whips used intense pressure to push MPs to vote for the war in Iraq and tuition fees.

The whips can certainly be ruthless. From 1977-9 the Labour government did not have a majority in the Commons. Every vote mattered.

Joe Ashton, then one of the Labour whips, said years later, "The whips' office killed six people—I say that with deep sympathy."

"Some of them had to have their operations at 10 o'clock in the morning and come in here to vote at 10 o'clock at night. Others had to postpone their operations until the recess."



Tory crisis deepens with new scandals

BORIS JOHNSON had a birthday party during the first lockdown of the pandemic. The latest revelation on Monday of yet another Downing Street party should be the final nail in his coffin.

On 19 June 2020, up to 30 people attended the event, sang Happy Birthday and enjoyed picnic food and cake for around 20-30 minutes. He won't be able to spin this as a "work event".

Meanwhile, ordinary people suffered throughout the pandemic. By 19 June 2020, the death toll for people who had died of the virus was over 40,000. We certainly didn't have much to celebrate.

But Number 10 staff and other special guests found it within themselves to "gather briefly" to "wish the prime minister a happy birthday".

Downing Street claims Johnson was in attendance "for less than ten minutes". This is ten minutes longer than people had with dying relatives.

At the time indoor gatherings of more than two people were banned except for work or education. And only six could gather outside—socially distanced.

The event took place in the Cabinet Room just after 2pm. It had been a surprise for Johnson after he returned from a trip to a school in Hertfordshire.

Johnson's wife Carrie threw the party that included guests such as interior designer Lulu Lytle—not a member of Number 10 staff.

Lytle designed Johnson's renovated flat that was funded by a Tory donor.

And Martin Reynolds, Johnson's private secretary who invited over 100 staff to the 20 May "bring your own booze" gathering, also attended.

So too were Jack Doyle, Number 10's current director of communications, and the head of operations

Shelley Williams-Walker.

They celebrated with members of Johnson's private office, Number 10 special advisers and operations and events staff.

Just nine days prior, party animal Johnson asked the public "to continue to show restraint and respect the rules which are designed to keep us all safe". And hours before the party kicked off, he had stood in silence for key workers who died in the pandemic.

Gathered

Johnson's family and friends also reportedly gathered later that evening to continue the celebrations.

But a spokesperson said, "This is totally untrue." Instead, they say he hosted a small number of family members outside.

To add to the crisis, Theodore Agnew, a Cabinet Office minister, resigned from his post over the government's handling of fraudulent Covid business loans.

Agnew announced his resignation in the House of Lords after it was revealed the Treasury last week wrote off £4.3 billion in Covid payments lost to fraud.

Senior civil servant Sue Gray is expected to release only the "findings" of her report into Downing Street parties this week. Relying on Gray's report to force Johnson out, or on pressure from disgruntled Tories, won't take working class people forward.

As Johnson hangs onto his job, he's threatened to pass as much blame as possible on to his subordinates.

That is always a risk as it encourages more people to come forward with bits of the truth.

Accused

Last weekend a Tory minister accused party whips of Islamophobia

THINGS ARE going from bad to worse for Boris Johnson

after she was sacked and warned not to discuss the matter in public.

Nusrat Ghani was transport minister from January 2018 until February 2020.

She alleged that a Tory whip said her "Muslimness was raised as an issue" by Downing Street for her firing.

Ghani added that the whip told her that her "Muslim woman minister status was making colleagues feel uncomfortable". Ghani told the Sunday Times newspaper she felt "humiliated and powerless" after the episode.

And she said she was warned not to discuss the issue or her "career and reputation would be destroyed".

If that's how the Tories behave towards their own, it's no surprise that they ram through racist laws and scapegoat Muslims.

It's disgusting, but flows directly from the leadership.

Johnson has openly attacked Muslims in the vilest terms, saying Muslim women who wear the burqa

look like "letter boxes" and "bank robbers".

Almost immediately afterwards, Tory MP Michael Fabricant said of Ghani, "She's hardly someone who's obviously a Muslim."

He added that her accusation of Islamophobia is a "lame excuse" for her sacking.

Johnson has now ordered the Cabinet Office to conduct an inquiry into the allegations.

In another sign of intimidation, Downing Street officials claim they have held back information from civil servant Sue Gray's investigation into the scandal of parties held during lockdown.

Three sources told The Independent newspaper they have not revealed messages and pictures on their phones.

They said a senior member of staff told them to remove anything that could fuel speculation in the wake of the initial revelations.

Dancing

Messages in a WhatsApp group were said to contain photographs of people drinking and dancing, as well as references to how hungover people were the next day.

"Everyone's terrified. It's a witch hunt," another source told The Independent.

"There's been a culture of fear in the office every day since the first party story broke."

Another source added, "I've held back from sharing evidence, it's too risky."

"And I'd have to explain why I'd deleted some stuff, which would mean saying I'd felt intimidated."

On other pages...

Workers feeling the squeeze
>>>Pages 10&11

Hospitals to be academised for private sector profit

THE TORIES last week announced that they plan to set up "academy school-style" hospitals, potentially run by the private sector.

Health secretary Sajid Javid wants to use the excuse of huge waiting lists for surgery and treatment to give privateers yet another foot in the door.

The plan would involve giving NHS trusts that "perform well" more independence, while turning those that don't into



Sajid Javid

"reform trusts". In schools, the drive towards academies has created large, unaccountable academy chains that funnel public money into private sector profits.

And under Tony Blair's Labour government, the private sector was handed two major hospitals—the Good Hope in Birmingham and Hinchbrook in Huntingdon.

Both experiments ended in disaster with the private sector handing back the hospitals to the state before the end of their contracts. They only worsened patient care and NHS trust finances.

But for Javid, these academies provide an excellent opportunity for the private sector to have another go.

Consultants cashed in

HUNDREDS OF NHS consultants are shareholders in private healthcare firms that have leached more than £1 billion in public money since 2015.

The Centre for Health and Public Interest (CHPI) has identified 481 consultants in England with shares in 34 private ventures.

In a report published last week, CHPI says the financial incentives created by the joint ventures could lead to a conflict of interest.

It is calling on regulators to investigate.

Between 2015 and 2020 joint ventures with consultants generated nearly £260 million in operating profits.

While the majority of this cash went to the private firms, consultant shareholders pocketed an estimated £31 million in dividends.



Strikes, like at Chep in Manchester, could drive Johnson out

Struggle now to drive Johnson out on our terms

THERE ARE more signs of Tory panic.

The Mail on Sunday newspaper claims chancellor Rishi Sunak now refers to the national insurance increase set for April as "the prime minister's tax".

He knows there is bitter anger already over rising prices and falling living standards, and that it will grow.

So he's trying to wriggle out from the blame—and lay the basis to stand for leader if Boris Johnson goes.

Sue Gray's report is expected to be handed to Johnson in the next few days. He will decide when, and how much, is released.

There's no guarantee MPs will even demand its full publication.

There's also no guarantee Gray will point the finger at Johnson or that he will go even if she does.

That's why the left has to stop spectating and fight to raise the level of struggle now to drive out Johnson. And this would be a good basis for further battles in the spring.

This won't come from Labour. It's a mistake to see this crisis as about an individual prime minister.

It's ultimately about the way millions of people know they've been lied to by the Tories, who've presided over a vast shift of wealth towards the super-rich.

Everyone should build solidarity for the strikes and campaigns going on—and fight to spread and extend them.

Tory backbenchers want climate policies out

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

SOME TORY MPs have come together to oppose the government's net zero plans, adding to the already deepening crisis. Led by Tory backbencher Steve Baker, the group uses fake concern about how the cost of living will impact ordinary people to attack measures to keep

emissions down. Baker told Sky News, "I genuinely believe that when the full cost of net zero starts hitting us, if people have never been given a choice at the ballot box, we could end up with something bigger than the poll tax, and certainly bigger than Brexit."

The Net Zero Scrutiny group, made up of about 20 MPs, recently signed an open letter that demanded the complete scrapping

of green levies on energy bills. The government's net zero plans have never been good enough. They are too little too late to address the climate emergency. But Tory backbenchers aren't trying to scrap them out of any concern for people's bills.

They want to turn ordinary people against climate activists and protect climate killing bosses' profits at all costs.

the socialist bookshop
bookmarks

Bookmarks the Socialist Bookshop is raising £25,000 to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and plan for the future. You can donate to our crowdfunding at bit.ly/3IyaHUb or use the 'Donate' button at bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

'For decades, Bookmarks Bookshop has carried the torch for independent, left wing, trade union and socialist thought. Now it's facing financial difficulties. I am happy to put my name to this appeal for funds to keep it going. With the Tories reeling from their own scandals, corruption and mismanagement, and an upcoming huge attack on standards of living, there is no more important time to keep Bookmarks going.'

Michael Rosen

1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QE ● 020 7 637 1848 ● bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

Get in touch with Socialist Worker



Email reports@socialistworker.co.uk
Web www.socialistworker.co.uk
Facebook "Socialist Worker (Britain)"
Twitter @socialistworker



Newsdesk
020 7840 5656
Circulation
020 7840 5601



Write to
Socialist Worker
PO Box 74955
London
E16 9EJ



Mandatory vaccination will sack thousands of NHS staff

by YURI PRASAD

BACK STORY

A STAGGERING 73,000 health workers could lose their jobs within weeks, plunging the NHS into its biggest crisis yet.

New government rules demanding all health workers in England that have “direct contact with patients” are double jabbed come into effect in April.

That means the staff that have not had their first jab by 3 February will be unable to meet the deadline.

NHS trusts have been instructed to then start the process of ending their employment. Only a few workers can expect to be transferred to non-patient facing roles.

Those job losses will come at a time when record numbers of health workers are off sick or self-isolating, and on top of the already 100,000 job vacancies that existed even before the pandemic.

The mandatory jab move is a Tory attempt to deflect the blame for the pandemic away from themselves by scapegoating unvaccinated people. This strategy will have devastating consequences.

“Throughout the pandemic it’s the government that have put health workers and our patients at risk,” a paramedic that did not wish to be named told Socialist Worker.

“They are the ones who’ve got rid of all the public safety measures and cut Covid self-isolation time, and they are the people that are still failing to ensure we have the right protective PPE.

“Those failings are the biggest threat to vulnerable people.

“But instead, the Tories want us to blame colleagues that aren’t persuaded of the vaccination’s safety for the fact that Britain’s death rate is so appallingly high.”

“I’m fully vaccinated and I want my colleagues to be too, but I think we need persuasion, not punishment. The government’s move is counter-productive.”

Health unions that earlier spoke out against mandatory vaccinations have become much quieter since legislation was passed last year.

The unions issue ample advice

From 1 April frontline NHS staff in England will be required to be double jabbed or loose their jobs

● Only a handful will be moved to non-patient facing roles after MPs voted on the legislation last month

● Over 70,000 NHS staff, around 5 percent, could remain unvaccinated by 1 April

● NHS managers will start sending dismissal letters from 3 February

staff who haven’t had their first dose

on how to best protect individuals facing the sack. But there is little to suggest they will run a political campaign against such a dangerous government policy—despite the Tories’ weaknesses.

Senior Unison union activist and nurse Karen Reissmann says there are key reasons for this.

“My union is avoiding organising a campaign to challenge this disastrous policy,” she said.

“Maybe they believe that most health workers have bought into the government’s scapegoating.

“They also seem to have underestimated how many people could be dismissed.”

Figures detailing the vaccination status of people working in the NHS in England are in chaos, with at least three different databases being used.

“I’ve heard of trusts saying initially that 900 workers were affected. But after writing to staff they’ve now reduced that estimate by 200 people,” said Karen.

“That’s good but that could still amount to around 10 percent of the workforce. If any individual NHS trust were to lose anything like that number the results would be devastating.”

Unison has also quietened down its opposition to mandatory vaccination since Labour voted in favour of the new laws.

More than 70,000 NHS staff could be unvaccinated as the regulations are enforced. Workers must force the hand of their union to take action to defend jobs.

A HEALTH worker administers her colleague a Covid-19 vaccination

Health worker says ‘vaccine mandate was the last straw’

ABIGAIL HAD wanted to work in health care since she was a small child.

But now after three “gruelling” years of training, and six years as a midwife in London, she has decided to quit.

“The vaccine mandate was the last straw for me,” she told Socialist Worker.

“For years I’ve worked in maternity in conditions that are unsafe.

The level of staffing is so low that mothers and their babies are often in danger.

“It was bad before the pandemic hit, but I think it got a lot worse during it.”

And, says Abigail, the constant stress involved in working in an over-stretched unit had already convinced her to consider a career change.

“I’ve been sick with stress because of how difficult conditions in maternity are,” she said.

“That means going home

constantly worrying about the people in your care and whether you’ve missed something.

Abigail said that when the government insisted that all staff be double vaccinated to “keep patients safe” it felt to her like a “kick in the teeth”.

“I’m not against Covid vaccinations,” she said.

“But I think it has to be an individual choice. And in my opinion, the vaccine is not proven to be effective, or safe.

redeploying Abigail to a non-public facing role.

So, after a very quick 15-minute chat, Abigail’s career as a midwife was over.

The NHS is currently short of 3,000 midwives and according to the RCM union, some 57 percent say they are considering leaving the NHS this year.

With the government refusing to offer a significant pay rise to health workers, without large scale actions and strikes we can expect the situation to get worse.

There were already

IN BRIEF

Protester demands free choice of whether to have the Covid-19 vaccination

Open letter against mandatory vaccines

HEALTH WORKERS in the Socialist Workers Party and others have initiated an open letter against mandatory vaccines.

They hope to get hundreds of health service staff, union activists and NHS campaigners to sign it. They hope it will create a group of people that can speak out in favour of vaccines, but against compulsory jabs that threaten jobs.

The letter starts by saying, “This is a difficult issue because, as health workers, we are very much in favour of the vaccine and will continue to speak to and encourage our colleagues and patients to get the vaccine for their own safety and the safety of others.”

And it notes the way the Tories have engineered a crisis in the health service, with staff “exhausted and burnt out after two years of working in emergency conditions”.

There were already

over 100,000 NHS vacancies that existed before any mass exodus of staff triggered by the mandate.

The letter also points out that Those who are sceptical of the vaccine “are more likely to be black and other minority ethnicities and in the lower grades of NHS staff.”

It adds, “This scepticism is not irrational—black people in the US, the UK and in the Global South have historically been subjected to utterly unethical experiments for medical science.

“The NHS should take this scepticism head on with meetings and campaigns.

“We do not want to see our BAME and working class colleagues driven out of the health service,” it says.

The open letter concludes by pointing out that the Tories have “pinned their entire pandemic response on

the vaccine and have removed almost all other measures”.

“We call on the Tories to remove the mandate and deadline for the sake of all NHS staff, vaccinated and unvaccinated, as well as its patients,” it says.

“We call on our unions to urgently campaign to put a stop to this mandate and to the potential summary dismissal of thousands of their members,” it continues.

Health workers and campaigners should download the open letter, share it with colleagues and seek to add signatures to it.

There is also a trade union model motion that branches can seek to pass.

Together they can promote discussion and push the health service unions to defend their members and the health service under attack.

Download the open letter from bit.ly/35b5VxA

Download the trade union model motion from bit.ly/NoMandateMotion

Floods of NHS workers are leaving the profession

ACROSS England some 17,000 fewer people were working in older adult care than before the rules about mandatory vaccines were brought into social care last year.

Yet shadow health secretary Wes Streeting said he was convinced to vote for the government’s motion because “we did not see the collapse in the social

care workforce that was warned of” when similar legislation was passed.

Already some NHS workers that refuse to have the vaccine have also decided to stop working in healthcare.

“A number of our unvaccinated ambulance crew members on the lowest grades have decided to work elsewhere,” said

the anonymous paramedic. “People come into the job because they want to make a difference, but then felt they were really badly treated.

“Now, with so many delivery firms and supermarkets offering jobs with similar pay rates, is it any wonder they are leaving?”

There is a terrible danger that thousands more may follow them.

Socialist Worker
WHAT WE THINK

TORY CRISIS MUST BE A CALL TO ACTION FOR LEFT

THE TORY crisis should be the gift that keeps on giving to the Labour Party, the left, the trade unions, and everyone who hates the Tories.

Every fresh revelation of yet another Downing Street party is another opportunity to put the boot in. Yet Labour just won’t accept the gift.

Its leader Keir Starmer is nowhere to be seen. And its leading politicians are so careful not to go too hard they seem scared of their own shadows.

In a BBC interview on Tuesday, Labour’s chosen spokesperson MP David Lammy wouldn’t even say if he thought Boris Johnson’s birthday party was a party.

For Labour, the big scandal is not that the Tories partied while many ordinary people were still separated from their families.

It’s that the revelations are a distraction from the government’s warmongering in Ukraine.

The consequence of all this is that Labour is now frightened that, when Johnson does go, the Tories will recover.

One anonymous Labour shadow minister told the LabourList website they want to

keep Johnson in place for as long as possible.

“It’s a nice and unusual feeling to be ahead of the polls,” they said. “I suspect it may evaporate once Johnson goes.”

The solution to this is to turn Johnson’s crisis into a crisis for the whole of the Tory party.

But Labour is frightened to do that.

It would mean hammering away at how the Tories put the interests of big business ahead of the lives of ordinary people.

And just as bosses are pushing up prices to protect their profits, the Tories plan to hit us with a national insurance increase and a massive rise in energy bills.

“The solution is to turn Johnson’s crisis into a crisis for the whole of the Tory party

MUSLIM HATE FLOWS FROM TOP

MIDDLE AND upper class people are more likely to hold prejudiced views about Muslims than working class people.

A detailed survey about racism in Britain revealed that 23.2 percent of people from “upper and lower middle class groups” held prejudiced views about Islam.

In comparison 18.4 percent of people from “working class groups” had those views.

The University of Birmingham survey, carried out with analytics firm YouGov, was based on

interviews with 1,667 people between 20 and 21 July 2021.

Overall, people in Britain are three times more likely to hold racist views of Muslims than other religions. Muslims are the second “least liked” group, after Gypsy and Irish Travellers, with over a quarter of people feeling negatively towards them. Those behind the survey suggest that negative stereotypes of Islam in society cause these ideas.

The report cites the example of Tory minister Nadine Dorries supportively tweeting racist

Labour insisted on supporting the Tories throughout the pandemic because it also wants to prove itself the friend of big business.

So Labour won’t attack the bosses for jacking up the cost of living.

And it won’t oppose lifting the energy price cap because it doesn’t want to upset the Big Six energy companies.

All of this means that, amid the biggest crisis for the Tories—and the system—in years, the left isn’t playing a part. The working class are left as spectators.

The trade union leaders that could do something about this take their cue from Labour.

They could organise the mass demonstrations and strikes that could make the Tories’ crisis about much more than birthday parties.

But they would rather sit on their hands and wait for a Labour government.

In reality, that means waiting for a Labour government that won’t do much for working class people either.

We need more resistance urgently. Anything else means giving the Tories’ gift back to them.

Breakfast in



Sign up to our morning newsletter Breakfast in Red and get the latest news every day.

For updates and analysis on the stories that matter go to socialistworker.co.uk/breakfastinred

socialistworker.co.uk



Our new website brings together stories of struggles the mainstream won’t report. It helps you find socialist meetings, protests and strikes—and the Marxist ideas and activism to change the world.

ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Johnson's problems go deeper than parties

ANYONE WHO thought the misgovernment of the pandemic couldn't get worse has been proved wrong.

Life and death decisions—there were 1,023 deaths due to Covid-19 in the first week of January—are now being dictated by whatever Boris Johnson thinks is necessary for his survival. So schools have been told to stop requiring face masks, even though Omicron is tearing through them, to appease the Covid-sceptics on the Tory backbenches and in the cabinet.

It makes one's head spin when one turns from this horror to the details of why Johnson is in such trouble. But this doesn't mean that there's nothing significant at stake.

Brexit has left British capitalism at a strategic impasse. Johnson achieved it on the basis of a highly contradictory economic programme.

On the one hand, he argued that breaking with the European Union (EU) would allow "Global Britain" to become a deregulated free market paradise. On the other hand, he promised "levelling up" to the "Red Wall"—the Leave-voting ex-Labour seats in the north and the midlands that tilted Tory in December 2019.

These promises remain unfulfilled. Before she became foreign secretary, Liz Truss negotiated trade deals with countries outside Europe. But their impact is trivial compared with the disruption that Brexit has brought to trade with Britain's most important market in the EU.

Meanwhile, levelling up means reducing the economic gap between London and south east England and other regions, especially in the north.

But this gap became a gulf thanks to Thatcherism. The large-scale closure of manufacturing industry in the 1980s and early 1990s devastated the north. Meanwhile, while the "Big Bang" of 1986 launched the City of London's ascent to the leading international financial centre.

This left the north heavily dependent on the public sector. New Labour was content to keep the state spending tap flowing, partly for obvious electoral reasons.

But when the Tory-Liberal coalition came to office in 2010 it launched austerity, supposedly to pay for the rescue of the banks after the financial crash of 2007-8. The ex-industrial regions were hit hard by this squeeze, which helps to explain why they voted Leave in 2016.

Promised

Johnson promised an end to austerity when he became prime minister. But the logic of "Global Britain" is more deregulation and privatisation. In a certain sense the pandemic allowed him to wriggle round this dilemma.

That's because it demanded a huge increase in public spending, financed by the Bank of England creating money and lending it to the government.

But the Thatcherite wing of the cabinet, headed by chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak, don't like this. They blame the rise in inflation—5.4 percent in December, the highest level since 1992—on the extra spending.

Sunak has sought to limit the rise in government debt by raising taxes to their largest share of national income since the late 1940s.

Brexit marked a huge triumph for the Thatcherite wing of the Conservative party. They had long demanded breaking with the EU—and Johnson purged many pro-European Tories. The problem is they achieved this thanks to a politician who was willing to borrow from the far right, campaigning against the establishment, and distancing himself from neoliberalism.

Many Tory MPs were very unhappy with Johnson's readiness to tax and spend.

The Downing Street scandals must make them wonder whether he has served his purpose.

In a Telegraph article that was supposed to be a defence of Johnson, the Brexiteer ex-MEP Daniel Hannan hinted at this. He argued that "reduced living standards will be the central fact of our politics for the rest of this Parliament", which the Tories can only overcome through "meaningful deregulation." "Many Conservative MPs ask each other whether these things can happen as their party is currently led and configured."

If a lot of Tories are deluding themselves that another dose of Thatcherism could revive the economy and keep hold of the Red Wall seats, then dumping Johnson definitely won't end their crisis.

MOAZZAM BEGG imprisoned in Afghanistan, Britain and Guantanamo but never convicted of any offences

Former Guantanamo Bay prisoner takes legal action

by ISABEL RINGROSE

FORMER Guantanamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg is planning to launch legal action against the Home Office to restore his passport.

Begg's passport was first revoked after his release from Guantanamo, the US prison camp on Cuba, in 2005. It was then taken from him eight years ago—and taken again at the end of last year just weeks after being reinstated.

In Guantanamo, Begg was held without trial or charge and tortured for three years. Since his release, he has been harassed by spy agencies, the Home Office and government.

Begg told Socialist Worker his experience has been "unbelievable".

He slammed the Tories, saying they're either "lying, or deeply incompetent, or both".

"I've had my passport revoked three times in the past 15 years," he said.

"I've been put in three military prison camps and been arrested by anti-terror police three times.

"I've not had my day in court, I've not been convicted of any crime."

In fact, Begg has been declared innocent of crimes that led to his passport being taken.

Begg, who works with advocacy group Cage, was arrested in February 2002 in Pakistan and given to US forces. While held in the

prison, British and US officers interrogated him. He was released in 2005.

He then travelled to Syria in 2012 and 2013. Before his second visit, Begg was told by M15 that he was free to travel.

Yet his passport was again taken in December 2013.

Applied

Begg applied for a new passport in 2019. It was issued in September 2021 and revoked weeks later. His treatment, Begg says, is the government "doing more of what it does—harassment and disruption".

Begg says he is being

treated this way because he's been attempting to hold the state to account for over 15 years. "MI5 were involved in my torture," he said.

"But having given evidence to the police about the role of the US and Britain in the torture of prisoners, there has been no accountability.

"I've been put through the worst they could—they physically, racially and religiously abused me. They beat people to death in front of me. But I keep trying to hold them to account."

Moazzam's lawyers sent a letter to the Home Office and Passport Office with notice of the legal action.

"With no reply, he will launch an application for judicial review if the government doesn't act.

"Criminal behaviour is not just on the streets," he added. "It happens within governments, among leaders, prime ministers and cabinet ministers.

"It doesn't matter to them I can't attend the marriage of my daughter or do investigations that show clearly the government was involved with war crimes—investigations that I intend to continue."

"The tide is with us. The mood is you can't trust people in power."

ANTI-RACISM

Organising against the far right

FASCIST Tommy Robinson is planning to visit Telford on Saturday in an attempt to use child sexual exploitation to further his far right agenda.

While Robinson does not have the strength he had four years ago, he is still set on stoking up hate against Muslims.

Shropshire and Telford Stand Up To Racism have called a demonstration against Robinson's visit and are calling on anti-racists to join them.

"While we resolutely

support justice for the victims in Telford, we oppose racist attempts to stigmatise one community," it said.

The protest will be held at 1pm in Southwater Square, Telford town centre.

And next Saturday, Stand Up To Racism and

the TUC are holding a conference on fighting racism in the workplace.

Workshops are covering the borders and police bills, the pandemic, teaching the legacy of slavery and the rise of the far right globally.

The conference will be in the lead up to Stand Up To Racism protests in March.

Demonstrations are taking place on 19 March in London and Glasgow, and 20 March in Cardiff.

More information at standuptoracism.org.uk

Israel's land grab ignites new wave of Palestinian resistance

Battles rage in Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem and in the Naqab desert, reports Nick Clark

FROM THE streets of Jerusalem to the desert of the Naqab, Israel's drive to snatch Palestinian land is sparking new battles between protesters and the state.

In the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah—where last year's Palestinian uprising began—Israel forced a family out onto the streets then demolished their home.

And in the Naqab desert—known by Israel as the Negev—thousands of Palestinian Bedouins fight heroically to stop Israel from forcing them from their land.

At 3am on a cold, wet January morning, Israeli counter terrorism and riot cops stormed the house of the Salhiya family in Jerusalem last week.

After arresting five of the family, the cops evicted the rest of the large household.

Then they bulldozed the building, leaving the Salhiyas with nothing. It was an abrupt, violent end to a decades long struggle by the Salhiyas to stay in the home they'd lived in since 1948.

"My father was asleep when they took him. They didn't let him put a jacket or shoes on," Yasmin Salhiya told the Middle East Eye website.

"They separated everyone that was there and started beating the young men before detaining them in the jeeps and taking them away.

Meanwhile in the Naqab, just a few miles south, more Israeli cops have used rubber bullets and teargas-dropping drones on protesters.

They have arrested at least 140 people there in the past month—almost half of them children.

Military

Israel wants to get rid of entire Bedouin villages there so that it might build new military and industrial infrastructure there—and grow the Israeli population.

And it has enlisted the help of the Jewish National Fund (JNF)—a charity with close ties to the state.

It funds the building of new Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

And through innocuous sounding tree planting projects, it takes hold of and transforms Palestinians' land, erasing their presence.

When the JNF began planting trees on land Bedouins use for farming, thousands of Palestinians marched to stop it.

In both cases, Israel is using the discriminatory laws that form the

BACK STORY

Longer length article available online
bit.ly/3KDrjf5

● The Nakba shows why it's right to oppose Israel
bit.ly/3rNtrYT

Resistance to Sheikh Jarrah evictions exposes Israeli state's racism
bit.ly/3HOx6t4

Israel's apartheid crimes exposed
bit.ly/33LMpHx

fabric of its system of apartheid and force Palestinians from their land.

In Jerusalem, the Salhiyas are victims of the "absentee law," which allows the state to confiscate the land of Palestinians who fled when Israel was created in 1948.

In the Naqab, Israel says the Bedouin villages are simply "unrecognised" settlements on state land.

By denying Palestinians the right to live where they want, the state hopes to push them into ever smaller enclaves.

So, in both cases, there's also a direct link to the Nakba—the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948 that Israel was built on.

As Human Rights Watch put it, the Salhiyas' eviction "turned them into refugees twice."

Protest in Britain in solidarity with Sheikh Jarrah

OVER 500 loud and angry protesters gathered at short notice outside the Israeli embassy in London on Friday last week.

They demonstrated in solidarity with Palestinians evicted from Sheikh Jarrah, east Jerusalem, and demanded freedom for Palestine and sanctions on Israel.

Elif and Tamanna, presidents of the Palestine society at Westminster University, attended the protest.

For Elif, freedom for Palestine means "stopping the killing and stopping evictions". She said the energy has died down after the huge protests last May and June. "We need to keep Palestine in the media," she told Socialist Worker.

Tamanna said, "We have to change the mainstream narrative that Israel didn't colonise Palestine, and challenge people's thinking on this."



PROTESTERS GATHER outside of the Israeli embassy in central London last week

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Angry and determined demonstrators chanted, "One, two, three, four occupation no more. Five, six, seven, eight Israel is a terrorist state." And, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

Mia attended the protests last year, including when over 100,000 people marched in London one of the biggest Palestine solidarity demonstrations in Britain.

"Any time something for Palestine is happening I come," she said. "Protesting helps to raise awareness—even if someone walks past and looks up Palestine. "Protesting is powerful."

Mia added, "Palestinian people, but also so many across the world, are oppressed and live in regimes of terror. Showing solidarity thousands of miles away can have an impact

on those people and regimes."

Placards on the protest read, "Freedom for Palestine," "Save Sheikh Jarrah," and, "Sanctions for Israel."

Machine

Speakers discussed putting sanctions on Israel and Western imperialist support for the Israeli military machine. They also pointed to the solidarity from trade unions and workers in the fight for Palestine.

Among the speakers were trade union leaders and officials from the Unite, NEU, Unison and UCU unions.

Kamel Hawwash from Palestine Solidarity Campaign told the rally his cousin was one of those in east Jerusalem facing eviction. His son has been detained without charge by Israeli forces since August. He slammed the evictions

as "appalling" and shouted "shame on you" at the British government for standing by while they took place.

Ellie told Socialist Worker that Palestinians should not be living under occupation. "The occupation is a result of conflict, politics and power," she said. "We have to fight over these issues too."

Cops tried to stop protesters from breaking out into the street, but following the rally a march took to the road and disrupted traffic.

Malaika travelled from Wales to join the protest. "It's important everyone keeps showing up," she said.

"People shouldn't sit back—we need the momentum. We have to keep fighting for equal rights for Palestinians and to end apartheid."

Isabel Ringrose



Decades of plunder are why poor suffer most in Tonga

A huge eruption in the Pacific caused widespread destruction—made worse by the rich, writes **Sam Ord**

TONGA IS still reeling after an underwater volcano erupted 40 miles off the coast of the Pacific country's main island on 15 January.

The full scale of the destruction is starting to become clear.

But it will have been made worse by decades of inequality that have benefited the island's rich, multinationals and imperial powers.

The eruption of Hunga Tonga caused huge tsunamis.

A series of waves battered the capital, Nuku'alofa, where a majority of the country's 104,000 population live.

At least five people have died—and many more are reported missing. Around 84 percent of Tonga's population are affected by ash fall and tsunamis.

Aerial images show entire villages have been wiped out.

On Mango Island, where 36 people lived, at least 20 buildings have been destroyed and one elderly woman died. An evacuation effort is in progress.

On the island Atata, most buildings have been destroyed and holiday resort workers are believed to be missing.

In Peru, two women drowned in the north as two metre high waves submerged a truck.

Power

Tonga's 36 inhabited islands are still suffering poor communication with other islands and countries due to a near-total power blackout.

Most significantly an undersea internet cable, connecting Tonga to the rest of the world was broken.

The devastation in Tonga will hit ordinary people hard.

Many tourism, farm and industrial workers will now have to rebuild their workplaces and start anew. Some 27 percent of the population

live in low income households, and youth unemployment stands at 40 percent.

Wages remain incredibly low—the average annual income was just £3,452 according to the World Bank.

Money made from tourism rarely remains in Tonga as multinational companies soak up the majority of the profits and pay poverty wages.

On average, a hotel concierge earns just £181 per month.

But the royal family and business-owning elite live in luxury.

Concentrated

As money is concentrated in the hands of the few, much of the disaster relief is left to charities or the people themselves.

Meanwhile, imperialist powers will try to use the crisis for their own advantage as aid comes with strings attached.

Tonga already receives aid from the US—both economic and military—in exchange for supporting US wars and interests.

But that doesn't benefit ordinary people on the islands.

Ghouliah billionaire Elon Musk also sensed an opportunity to promote his own business. "Could people from Tonga let us know if it is important for SpaceX to send over Starlink terminals?" he asked.

Further eruptions are likely and Tonga can expect more natural disasters.

More investment into monitoring, emergency response programmes and better infrastructure is needed.

And there needs to be a reckoning with the elite that hoard the money for themselves.



On other pages...

Western-backed airstrikes kill more than 70 in Yemen >> **Page 20**

A GLIMPSE of the devastation on Tonga after an underwater volcano erupted earlier this month

Is oil company Repsol using disaster to duck responsibility for spill in Peru?

THE PERUVIAN government declared a climate emergency this week after 6,000 barrels of crude oil, owned by the company Repsol, spilled into the South Pacific Ocean.

The spill has hit over 20 beaches along the country's coasts, killing and injuring marine life. Hundreds of dead birds have been seen floating in the sea covered in oil.

And the spill is already having a devastating impact on those who live in Peru's coastal areas.

Fisher Bernardo Espinoza told reporters, "Right in the middle of high season they have gone and basically cut off our arms."

"We can't work. We already are using up the last of our savings."

Another fisher, Giovana Rugel, said, "Nothing is selling at all. The fish more than anything comes out with the smell of oil, and people don't buy it, they don't eat it because they are afraid of getting poisoned by it, by the oil spill."

Fishers protested and held a sit-in outside Repsol refinery in the province of Callao to demand action be taken against the company last week.

They held signs reading, "Repsol killer of marine fauna," and, "No to ecological crime."

Cleaning up after South Pacific spill

The spill is likely to have a terrible impact on biodiversity and industry in the years to come, but what caused it is highly contested.

The widely supposed view is that large waves caused by the eruption of an undersea volcano near Tonga hit an oil tanker that was unloading. This is the version of the story that Repsol has gone with.

The company denied all responsibility for the incident, saying it could not predict the weather conditions that

supposedly caused the spill. But a new report from Peru's Supervisory Body for Investment in Energy and Mining contradicts this.

The report conducted by scientists found no connection between the spill and the eruption of the volcano thousands of miles away.

Instead the report concluded the spill was much more likely caused by sudden movement by the Mare Doricum tanker, causing it to rupture.

The Supervisory Body for Investment in Energy and Mining has now asked Repsol what it did to stop the spill. Initial reports by the company said that only very small amounts of oil had spilt into the ocean.

And in a statement Peru's environmental assessment and enforcement agency agreed that Repsol had not done enough to stop more damage to wildlife after the spill.

Irresponsible companies dead set on making as much profit as possible are causing devastation to the planet that will impact the poorest first.

Sophie Squire

The new Labour MP is rotten

IN THE 2019 election campaign, with a couple of hundred other socialists, I heard Lucy Burke speak—the Labour Party candidate for Bury South constituency.

In 2020 most of those people came out again to take the knee in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Keir Starmer has delivered a kick in the teeth to all those people by allowing the Tory Christian Wakeford to defect and become the Labour MP for Bury South.

Wakeford voted for the £20 a week cut to Universal Credit, the Nationality and Borders Bill and the police and crime bill.

The fact that Wakeford feels comfortable in Labour shows the depth of the crisis in the Tory Party. But it also shows just how far to the right Labour has travelled since 2019.

Tory MPs are now welcome, while thousands of socialists are expelled.

But in Greater Manchester, as well as elsewhere, there is an alternative. Last Saturday, there was a fantastic Kill the Bill demonstration in the city.

The bus driver Tracey Scholes was reinstated after a massive campaign and the Chep workers have been on all-out strike since before Christmas.

Socialist politics and organisation based on these struggles outside of parliament are the way forward.

Adam Rose
Bury South

South Yorkshire bus strike had complications

THE ARTICLE about the Stagecoach strikes in South Yorkshire emphasised the determination and strength of the pickets, which should encourage other workers to fight.

It stated that the final settlement was higher than most had expected, but rightly points out it does not keep up with the true rate of inflation.

However, the sentence saying the action was suspended by workers in Barnsley and Rotherham leaving those in Sheffield to fight alone was not accurate.



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Tories' failed school reading scheme is not a surprise

THE UCL university study published this week—which lambasts the government directed method of teaching young children to read—comes as no surprise to early years practitioners like myself.

The narrow focus on synthetic phonics—first teaching letter sounds—is failing children and sucking the joy out of teaching them.

Schools are increasingly encouraged to invest in schemes that dictate exactly how we should teach, and children should learn.

The online training for my school's new scheme included questions like, “There should be no mix and match of phonics programme resources”—true or false?” The answer was true. Woe

betide any teacher that strayed from the brand and thought they could mix and match resources.

I suppose all those other phonic pictures and books need to be shredded.

I shared the study to my nursery and reception teacher—they both replied they couldn't agree more with its findings.

We have an awful new phonics scheme at the moment called Little Wandle, which is totally full of corporate rubbish.

The schemes are prescriptive, even down to the facial expressions you should use with the children.

Everyone has to learn the same mantras and all the lesson plans are written by the company. Children are even tested on

nonsense words that don't make sense. Educators shouldn't behave like robots to produce children who are not encouraged to think about the world around them.

The reality is they have to consume small chunks of contextless fodder.

Like other rules the Tories set, I guarantee they don't apply to their own children.

No doubt in public schools, teachers will use a variety of strategies and a breadth of texts because that is what actually works.

As teaching assistants our time is taken up in the early years of education with interventions to get children through the phonics test.

Julie Forgan
York

Influencer is ignorant on poverty

MOLLY-MAE HAGUE, a British influencer and creative director of fast fashion brand Pretty Little Thing, has been under scrutiny for comments on poverty.

Her statements—such as “we all have the same 24 hours in the day” and other “motivational comments”—have caused a debate.

It centres not only on her success, but the falsity of the “feminist girl boss” figure that has been pushed by the system in recent years.

Hague's PR crisis didn't stop there. A later expose saw her advertising the



Fast fashion sweatshop

position of a social media manager with a salary of £20,000—ridiculously low for that kind of job.

She thinks that regardless of where you come from, becoming CEO of a multimillion-pound

company by the age of 22 is achievable for those that simply work hard enough.

This is a reductive and privileged assertion.

It leaves a very bitter taste coming from a woman that represents the white, upper class, and hyper-feminine image that plagues Instagram.

Even more so, considering that her vast wealth comes at the cost of the thousands of exploited sweatshop workers that create Pretty Little Thing's unsustainable garments.

Lola Bhlair
Glasgow

Just a thought...

Change is from struggle

THE LEFT—in the Labour party or outside—would do well to read Nick Clark's article on Jeremy Corbyn's potential new party (Socialist Worker, 12 January).

We won't change society by working within a corrupt parliamentary system designed to prevent change in favour of ordinary people.

Real change comes from the outside.

Gary Smyth
via Twitter

Boot out Johnson on our terms

ALTHOUGH I'LL be glad to see the back of Boris Johnson, I feel irritated by media manipulation.

It suits them for whatever reason to get rid of him now—so they think let's go for him.

But there have been bigger scandals in my opinion, such as releasing Covid patients into care homes.

David
via Twitter

Tories are hypocrites

I'M NOT obeying “rules” that the rule makers break. It was clear back in March 2020 they only made the rules for the minions.

They profit grossly from extortionate fines, which should be paid back in full with compensation and full pardon of criminal wrongdoing.

Vile government cretins on their high horse.

Time to fight back people.

Alison Jarrold
Facebook

No place for socialists

TWO YEARS into his term as leader of the Labour Party, Keir Starmer's only “achievement” is to make his party a hostile environment for socialists.

But it's a welcome place for vile, racist, reactionaries jumping ship from the Tory party in a desperate attempt to save their seats.

Sasha Simic
Hackney

THE LOOMING STRUGGLES OVER THE COST OF LIVING WORKERS FEELING THE SQUEEZE

As inflation rises ever higher, every working class person will soon be made to feel the pressure. **Sam Ord** speaks to workers already starting to struggle, and says the only response is fighting back

FROM THE lowest paid workers to those that once felt they could get by on their pay, we'll all be made to bear the brunt of rocketing prices. With inflation hitting 7.5 percent last week, it'll take a fight to stop people going under.

Bella from Hastings is a train cleaner for outsourcing company Churchill. She and her colleagues are currently balloting for strikes to win an inflation busting £15 per hour.

"I'm definitely struggling," she told Socialist Worker. "When I first started with Churchill in 2017, I managed to save £1000 in six months. Now I'm lucky to have £10 left by payday."

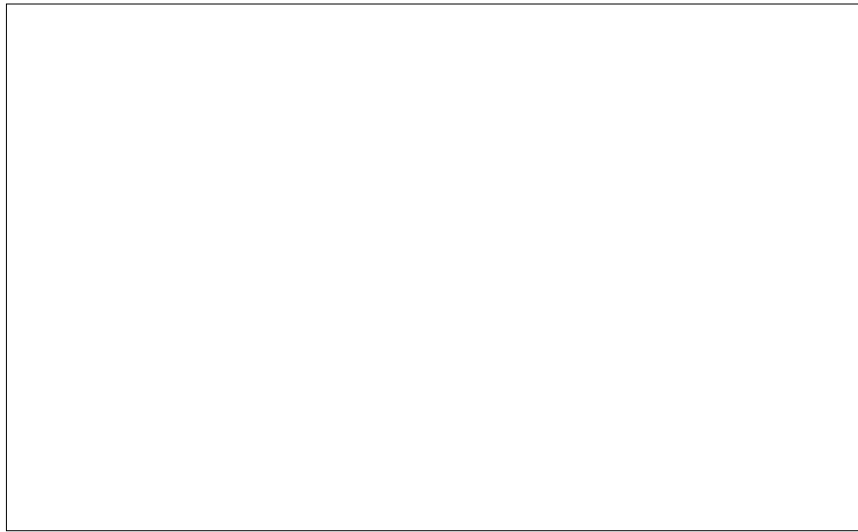
"We're all going to be in massive debt. We're going to have to start getting payday loans and things like that just keep our head above the water."

"There's a lot of colleagues who've had to open bank overdrafts in the last few years. Come payday you're skint, but you've still got bills to pay, you have to pay rent and buy something to eat."

Bella said the rising cost of living, coupled with wages as low as £8.91 has meant Churchill's cleaners have been struggling for years.

Sometimes this can result in dangerous conclusions. A recent survey of Churchill's workers by Bella's union, the RMT said, "69 percent reported that they have gone into work while sick because they couldn't afford not to."

With inflation rising "it will get worse", said Bella.



“

Bella's union reports that some 69 percent of her colleagues have gone into work while sick

Bella and her colleagues have been working longer shifts and taking more overtime. But she said her "money is not going as far as it used to".

Bosses at Churchill know the hardships workers face. Bella feels "totally exploited" every time she goes to work.

She said, "I think most cleaners already are signed on or have second jobs as a backup plan because if you get sick or end up in the hospital you're fucked."

"We're worried if travelcards go up any again because people won't be able to afford to get to work. If rent goes up people will end up homeless and in the worst cases, some people may end up

Even workers who thought themselves 'comfortable' are now worried by rising prices (left) Meanwhile, those on the worst pay are turning to pay day lenders to make ends meet (below)

dying because poverty is just so bad. That's how bad it's going to be."

The rising cost of living will hit the poorest hardest. Many will now have to choose between eating or heating their homes.

This is because despite rising costs, wages haven't risen in response.

It follows over a decade of austerity, plus some very recent attacks such as the £20 cut to Universal Credit benefit and a coming increase in National Insurance payments.

But even workers who previously considered their income relatively stable will begin to feel the strain.

To take just one example, the Tories are set to lift the energy price cap—which limits how much energy companies can charge—in April. It means household energy bills could rise some 50 percent.

Suddenly, expenses workers may have been able to afford—your car breaks down, your boiler needs a repair, your landlord kicks up the rent or your mortgage goes up—become a much bigger hit.

Jas teaches business studies at

Newham Sixth Form College (NewVic) in east London. He and his colleagues have been striking over workload, a culture of bullying and academisation threats.

He told Socialist Worker that the rising cost of living is a worry for himself, his colleagues and students.

"I'm worried about heating prices going up," said Jas.

"Petrol prices are high and increasing. I'm walking more but it cost me £80 to fill up my car the other day."

Jas believes the rising cost of living will have a further impact on students' ability to learn. Already 50 percent of

“

Jas's sixth form students often can't afford laptops, and so must study using their phones instead

children in Newham live in households in poverty.

Jas pointed out how students when put into online lessons over the pandemic "were cooped up in one room" with their siblings.

"They were using phones because they can't afford laptops."

"I'm worried for them now because parents can't heat their homes and they're on the bread line—now is like the tipping point."

Jas believes that a small fix would be to subsidise train as well as bus travel. Some of his students travel an hour and a half from Dagenham to access NewVic's facilities.

Many of these students are forced to commute via the underground. If ticket prices increase, "many students could move to different schools", he said.

"I'm expecting student poverty and the use of food banks to increase. And parents wages just don't go up with inflation so they'll see a fall in living standards, this has been happening for decades."

INFLATION

Figures don't tell whole story

THE mainstream media and Tory government will have you believe inflation has risen to "only" 5.4 percent, up from 4.2 percent the month before.

This is because they use an incredibly flawed measure of inflation—CPI—that exclude many household bills.

A more accurate measure is RPI, which includes all factors.

RPI has soared to 7.5 percent, but even this measure of inflation doesn't give a clear picture.

Cheapest

As food writer and activist Jack Monroe pointed out, it is usually the cheaper products facing the sharpest rise.

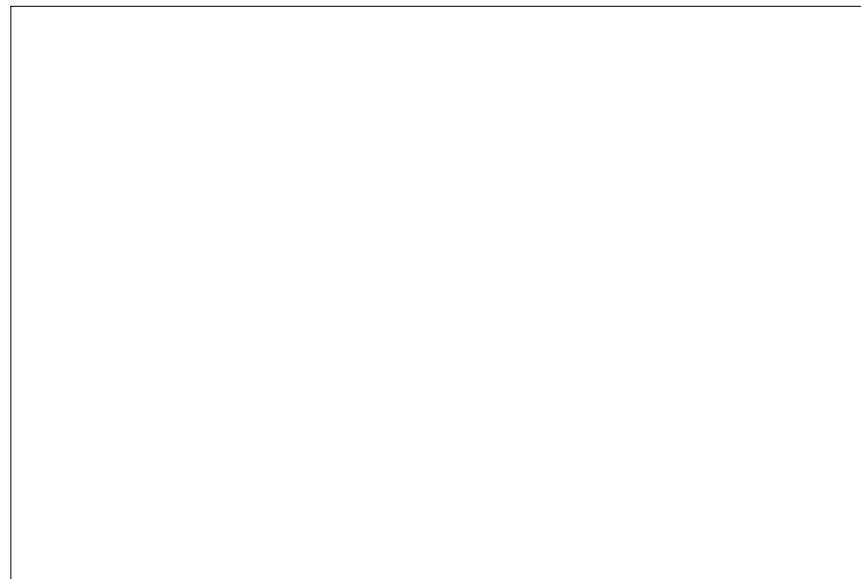
They tweeted, "This time last year, the cheapest rice... was 45p for a kilogram bag. Today it's £1 for 500g. That's a 344 percent price increase."

"An upmarket ready meal range was £7.50 ten years ago, and is still £7.50 today," they added.

"If the price of that had risen at the same rate as the cheapest rice in the supermarket, that £7.50 lasagne would now cost £25.80."

Supermarket bosses will choose to keep premium products stable to secure the return of affluent customers. This system suits the Tories as their voters are among the wealthiest.

The ruling class will tell us that inflation is at 5.4 percent to deny workers a real pay rise and at best offer them a real terms pay cut.



Glasgow 1977—Labour used untrained soldiers to break the national firefighters' strike

How bosses and Labour tried to make us pay in the 1970s

WHENEVER THE bosses' system causes rocketing inflation, they'll always try to make working class people pay.

Prices are rising because firms are trying to protect their profits. Disruption and shut downs during the coronavirus pandemic meant production of certain goods and services, such as building materials and semiconductor chips, fell.

Manufacturing bosses raised their prices to protect their profits, or even to boost them by taking advantage of the reduced supply.

The bosses who buy these materials find that the increased costs eat into their own profits.

So they raise their prices to make up for it. It causes a knock-on effect, where price rises get passed on right down to the goods that ordinary people buy in the shops.

Relentless

So the cause of inflation is the relentless pressure across the whole of the system to keep striving for profits. And rather than take the hit themselves, bosses decide the solution is to cut and hold down workers' pay.

But it's a risky strategy that can lead to explosions of strikes and workplace struggle.

In 1975 amid a global economic recession inflation hit 24 percent. Bosses, bankers and the right wing press blamed it on workers' wages being supposedly too high—and demanded pay "restraint."

The then Labour government

“

In the 1970s, union leaders' loyalty to Labour meant they suppressed and sabotaged strikes

responded with the "social contract"—a deal with union leaders to keep wage increases low. When inflation was still at 16.5 percent in 1976, trade union leaders agreed to a limit of 4.5 percent.

Out of loyalty to Labour, union leaders did their best to hold back struggle. But they couldn't stop it completely.

Overdue

In 1976 the seafarers' union threatened strike action over a long overdue pay award. The general secretary of the TUC union federation, Len Murray, told them, "By god, we'll make sure no union supports you. We'll cripple you."

The first ever national firefighters' strike took place the following year. The TUC voted narrowly not to back them.

Three major strikes by groups of skilled workers in 1977 collapsed after trade union leaders instructed other workers to cross their picket lines.

The result was what became known as the Winter of Discontent—an outburst of feeling over five years of betrayal and disappointment.

Tanker drivers, council workers, water workers and others struck against Labour's pay limits. Health workers and local government workers joined them. Many of the strikers were at least partially successful.

But the bitterness and disillusion with Labour led to the election of the Tory Margaret Thatcher's government in 1979.

Today it's a Tory government overseeing rocketing inflation and bosses' wage restraint. But we've still seen far too little fightback led by trade union leaders.

Many still hope that a Labour government will come in and ease the pressure—even though Keir Starmer, desperate to please the bosses, offers little hope of that.

But just as union leaders couldn't hold back the pressure on workers in 1976, they'll also need an answer to the cost of living crisis now. It's up to every trade union activist to pressure them into fighting.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party online meetings



Marchers carry a protester shot by British soldiers

Murder, lies, cover-up and the British State 50 years since Bloody Sunday in Derry

BIRMINGHAM
Wed 2 Feb, 7pm
281-634-5938

BRIGHTON AND HOVE
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
818-9286-5617

CAMBRIDGE
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
681-800-4408

CHESTERFIELD
Thu 3 Feb, 7pm
828 532 8731

DEVON AND CORNWALL
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
865-2972-2883

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE
Thu 3 Feb, 7pm
992-204-9372

LIVERPOOL
Wed 2 Feb, 7pm
Friends Meeting House,
22 School Ln, L1 3BT
493-925-5919

LONDON: HACKNEY
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
Powerscroft Rd, Lower
Clapton, E5 0PU
854-8245-8715

MANCHESTER
Wed 2 Feb, 7pm
Friends' Meeting House, 6
Mount St, M2 5NS
323-178-7151

NEWCASTLE
Thu 3 Feb, 7pm
368-595-2712

PORTSMOUTH
Wed 2 Feb, 7.30pm
488-934-2809

BRADFORD
Omicron, corruption and crisis—how do we get rid of the Tories?
Thu 3 Feb, 7pm
885-9187-7552

BRISTOL
LGBT+ history month—how do we beat back the bigots and win liberation?
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
Kuumba Centre, 20 Hepburn Rd, BS2 8UD

CARDIFF
Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan and the West—are we heading for war?
Wed 2 Feb, 7.30pm
823-945-1917

DORSET
Is the media all powerful?
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
846-0613-4382

EAST MIDLANDS
Rosa Luxemburg—reform or revolution
Wed 2 Feb, 7pm
354-874-4790

GLASGOW
The far right defeated in Chile—what next for the left?
Thu 3 Feb, 7pm
879-2402-3259

HARLOW
The far right defeated in Chile—what next for the left?
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480

HASTINGS
The bloody history of the British Empire
Wed 2 Feb, 7pm
The White Rock Hotel,
1-10 White Rock,
TN34 1JU
880-5464-3685

HOME COUNTIES
China, the Uyghurs and the left
Thu 3 Feb, 6.30pm
915-544-1237

HUDDERSFIELD
The revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx
Wed 2 Feb, 6.30pm
290-168-1804

LONDON: HARINGEY
Why are prices rising and how can we make the bosses pay?
Wed 2 Feb, 7.30pm
459-388-1576

LONDON: ISLINGTON
Why we celebrate the Russian Revolution
Thu 3 Feb, 7pm
854-8245-8715

LONDON: SOUTH EAST
50 years of Asian struggles that changed Britain
Thu 3 Feb, 7pm
529-913-6390

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS
Covid, anti-vaxxers and conspiracies
Wed 2 Feb, 7.30pm
818-391-0420

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST
China, the Uyghurs and the left
Wed 2 Feb, 7.30pm
906-652-5299

LONDON: WEST AND NORTHWEST
Is Britain becoming a police state?
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
860-0226-3484

NORTH EAST SCOTLAND
Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Russia and the West
Wed 2 Feb, 7.30pm
854-8245-8715

NORWICH
#BLM—Race, class and resistance
Wed 2 Feb, 7.30pm
906-652-5299

OXFORD AND THAMES VALLEY
Is revolution possible in the 21st century?
Thu 3 Feb, 7pm
Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, OX1 1BX

SOUTHAMPTON
Fight the Nationality and Borders Bill—the case against immigration controls
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
381-513-5080

SWANSEA AND WEST WALES
Why are prices rising and how can we make the bosses pay?
Thu 3 Feb, 7pm
902-964-963

TELFORD
The revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx
Thu 3 Feb, 7.30pm
825-2329-5209

WIGAN
What's happening in Kazakhstan?
Thu 3 Feb, 6.30pm
872-5136-9540

WOLVERHAMPTON AND WALSALL
Work and resistance in 21st century Britain
Wed 2 Feb, 7.30pm
914-9548-1031

YORK AND SCARBOROUGH
The need for a socialist revolution
Wed 2 Feb, 7.30pm
827-489-7492

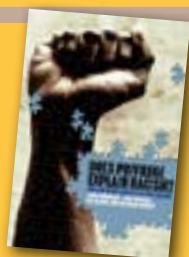
BOOKMARKS the socialist bookshop



The Labour Party—A Marxist History
by Tony Cliff, Donny Gluckstein and Charlie Kimber, £14.99



Breaking Up the British State—Scotland, Independence and Socialism £12



Does privilege explain racism?
by Esme Choonara, Ken Olende, Yuri Prasad and Weyman Bennett, £3



Transgender Resistance
by Laura Miles
£10

PHONE 020 7637 1848 WEB bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

CONTACT THE SWP

Phone 020 7840 5600
Email enquiries@
swp.org.uk
Post PO Box 74955
London E16 9EJ

A real life fairy tale, where the trees move for the rich

Taming the Garden is a strange and sad documentary of how even the natural world is shaped by the wealth and power of the elite, writes **Blythe Taylor**

THE IMAGE of a giant tree floating in the sea seems like an act of magic—something from the pages of a fantasy novel.

And as one resident of a coastal village in Georgia remarks, “It’s like a fairytale.” Yet this film is a documentary—Taming the Garden by Salome Jashi.

It’s the story of an elusive buyer of century old trees.

Accompanied by a dog with a little red ribbon, he scouts out the oldest and most magnificent trees across the coast of Georgia for the private garden of former prime minister Bidzina Ivanishvili.

Once a special tree has been selected and the owner paid off under the promise of improved local infrastructure, the heavy machinery moves in. It feels as though we are witnessing a collective trauma.

Chasm

A chasm leaves the earth bare where villagers once grew up underneath the branches of “the beauty of our district.”

Yet the filmmakers are careful to maintain a detached relationship, plugging the gaps with superfluous still shots of the sea and close-ups of machinery.

The most interesting scenes come from the conversations between the workers and those of the families affected.

An elderly woman broods over the line of trees which shelter her home from strong winds.

The workers need to cut them down in order to make way for the main prize.

They’re not quite attuned to her hesitancy as she recounts how she



AN ANCIENT tree on its way to the garden of former prime minister Bidzina Ivanishvili

planted them when she was 25 years old. A gathering of curious residents, some teary and others cheery, say goodbye to their oldest and most special of trees.

Our farewell is quickly cut short as we’re suddenly jolted into a park with flamingoes and other wild birds in the background.

Is this it, the villain’s lair? Concrete paths wind between manicured

grassy mounds, and workers on lawn mowers are dotted around.

An impressive collection of century old trees stand on top of the mounds as an automatic sprinkler system feeds their roots.

But knowing what we already know, there is a distinct feeling of unpleasantness.

Every tree appears to be supported by a black cable, as if they cannot

support themselves anymore. Taming the Garden is a quietly evocative film.

Its resonating sadness taps into the familiar loss of our natural world and the sense that we’re never fully in control of our own surroundings.

Meanwhile, the superrich uproot and claim ownership to whatever it is they so happen to desire.

Taming the Garden is in cinemas from Friday 28 January

The families fighting for truth and justice from police in South Wales

TELEVISION

DEATH OF TWO BLACK MEN: POLICE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Available now on BBC iPlayer

TWO BLACK men died in South Wales after contact with police in 2021.

Hundreds of people joined marches and protests in Cardiff and Newport demanding the truth after each of their deaths.

A year on, the families of Mohamud Hassan and Mouayed Bashir speak to BBC Wales Investigates reporter Mo Jannah.



Mohamud Hassan

THEATRE

WHEN EVE SPAN

Fri 11 Feb, 7.30pm

The Ye Olde Rose and Crown Pub Theatre, Walthamstow, east London, E17 4SA.

£10. Book online at bit.ly/PeasantsPlay

“WHEN ADAM delved and Eve span who was then the Gentleman?” That would have been the retort on many an English peasant’s lips when piously lectured in the pulpit that kings had a “divine right” to rule over them.

On the contrary, the world god originally had in mind was a classless, egalitarian one.

By 1381 this idea was



Rebel priest John Ball

being vigorously preached by John Ball and many other “Hedgerow priests” to a bitterly oppressed and increasingly restless population.

It followed decades of pandemic, economic and ecological disaster, endless wars and viciously incompetent leadership.

Finally, a poll tax sparked a revolt which, for a few incredible weeks, blazed across England.

It changed the participants forever and very nearly overturning the concept of kingship itself.

Watch this rehearsed reading of *When Eve Span*, a new play, funded by the Artists International Development Fund and devised with Interact Theatre in Philadelphia.

It is based on Mark O’Brien’s book *A History of the Peasants Revolt 1381*.

Lives at the sharp end of the ‘hostile environment’

DOCUMENTARY

HOSTILE

Touring cinemas until 3 March. Go to hostiledocumentary.com for tickets and dates

HOSTILE EXAMINES Britain’s “hostile environment”—the term used by the Tory government in 2012 to describe the atmosphere it wanted to create for migrants.

The film explores the lives of international students, members of the Windrush

generation and so-called “highly-skilled migrants” and community organisers.

The film features stories directly from those who are deeply affected by the policy.

An NHS IT Engineer has spent tens of thousands of pounds on visa applications and is still waiting for settled status.

A member of the Windrush generation, has not recovered from detainment. And international students, now destitute, face deportation.

What’s on at..

Bookmarks

The socialist bookshop

Second Hand Sunday

● A second hand book fair, with thanks to a kind donation from the estate of Martin Pitt, who has left the shop with a considerable amount of books

● Sun 13 Feb, Bookmarks Bookshop, London, WC1B 3QE

bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

IN A deliberate act of mass murder, ordered from the top, British paratroopers massacred unarmed civilians in Derry in Northern Ireland 50 years ago.

The Tory government wanted to crush the Civil Rights Movement, which had flourished in the late 1960s in protest at the second class treatment of Catholics.

British troops were sent into Northern Ireland in August 1969. The armed sectarian police force in the North could no longer contain an effective insurrection in Derry, the province's second largest city.

People were fighting back against a system where access to jobs, housing, and effective votes depended on whether you were Catholic or Protestant.

The Labour government acted to prop up a Unionist government that ran Northern Ireland as a sectarian, one party state.

Just five months before the 30 January massacre, internment without trial was introduced. Hundreds of Catholics were rounded up, detained and tortured. A march was organised in opposition to internment—and was deemed illegal.

It was scheduled to begin in the Creggan area of Derry and to weave through the Bogside before proceeding to Guildhall Square in the city centre.

It never got that far. Soldiers went into the Bogside and opened fire. Thirteen died on the day and one more shortly after.

A MONTH earlier, General Harry Tuzo, the army commander in Northern Ireland, told the then Tory government it had to make a choice.

It was “between accepting that Creggan and Bogside were areas where the army was not able to go or to mount a major operation which would involve, at some stage, shooting at unarmed civilians.”

On 7 January 1972 General Robert Ford declared in a memo to Tuzo, “I am coming to the conclusion that the minimum force necessary is to shoot selected ringleaders.”

Four days later prime minister Ted Heath told his cabinet, “A military operation to reimpose law and order would be a major operation necessarily involving numerous civilian casualties.”

Bloody Sunday meant the end of the Civil Rights Movement.

The massacre drove young men and women to join the Provisional IRA.

Within weeks of Bloody Sunday the government replaced the Unionist Stormont parliament with direct rule from Westminster. The British government tried to cover up the truth of its butchery from



BLOODY SUNDAY

STATE TERROR USED TO CRUSH DISSENT

Fifty years ago British troops opened fire on the streets of Derry. Simon Basketter explores how the British state murdered innocent people on Bloody Sunday—and then tried to get away with it

the moment the last shot was fired. The army claimed it fired because it was shot at by the IRA and that demonstrators were armed with nail bombs. This was a lie.

Former head of the British Army, Sir Michael Jackson, was second in command in Derry on Bloody Sunday.

He wrote entirely false reports of what the soldiers did on the day, including a number of alleged personal accounts of senior officers and a shot list.

It describes unnamed people firing an inaccurate number of bullets at people who, in reality, were in completely different places. Apparently bullets went through entire buildings.

Lord Chief Justice, Lord Widgery, the highest judge in Britain, headed an inquiry. It was a whitewash. Successive

at the first inquiry to prove the army's version of events.

But Saville concluded, “We have found no evidence that anyone involved in military information falsified any Army or government document relating to Bloody Sunday, nor any evidence that anyone involved in military information disseminated to the public anything about Bloody Sunday, knowing or believing that information to be untrue.”

The reality, was that evidence Saville showed revealed that the orders for the massacre of civilians came from the top of the British establishment with, at least, the connivance of the British government.

Jackson ended up head of the British army.

Bloody Sunday exposes the brutality at the heart of the British state. And it also shows that if anything critical of the state emerges, our rulers will try to convince us that it was an aberration.

IMPORTANTLY there was a wave of revolt immediately after Bloody Sunday in both the north and south of Ireland.

There were strikes, protests and riots across Northern Ireland. In every major town thousands stopped work, marched, and occupied British-owned businesses.

A week after Bloody Sunday, 50,000 defied a ban and marched in Newry.

In Southern Ireland thousands immediately gathered in angry protest outside the British embassy in Dublin. Thousands of workers joined a general strike.

In Cork for three days running 10,000 people marched.

Irish prime minister Jack Lynch was forced to declare 2 February, the day of the victims' funerals, a public holiday.

Some 100,000 people marched, burning the British embassy to the ground. Some 15,000 people marched in London.

Bernadette Devlin, now McAliskey, the socialist and Westminster MP, punched the Tory home secretary Reginald Maudling in the face.

At a protest afterwards she said, “Maybe you felt better after I had hit Maudling in the House of Commons. But if you think my fist is going to bring down the Tory government, you've got another think coming.”

“The Labour Party certainly isn't going to do it, and the only people who can do it is you. Look around Britain today and you will see the miners being kicked on their picket lines.”

“It is not our function in life to die for Ireland. It is our function to live, work and struggle for a workers' republic.”

“It is not sympathy or feelings of frustration that are needed now. You must go away determined to organise and act.”

‘It is what happens to people in a class society’

EAMONN McCann was one of the organisers of the civil rights march in Derry in 1972. He has campaigned for the truth to come out about the massacre ever since. He spoke at a rally organised last week by People Before Profit in Derry. This is an excerpt from his speech.

“The people who refuse to come clean about Bloody Sunday—the ruling class, the establishment, whatever you want to call them—are the same people who won't complain about any other aspect of life.

These are people who swear that they are in favour of equality and yet entrench the rotten rich above us all and concentrate on making the poor poorer.

The people swearing that they were committed to the environment go round the next day with investments in fossil fuels, fuelling the fires that scorch the earth.

Bloody Sunday is not just a discrete thing that happened in Ireland back in 1972.

Remember 1970 in Kent State after Richard Nixon ordered the bombing of Cambodia.

Students protested, and the National Guard killed four people.

Eleven days later, protesting black students

at Jackson State College were killed by the cops.

Those things are connected. They are coming from the same root. They are all examples of what happens to people living in a class divided society.

If they rise up, their lives count for nothing.

The Bloody Sunday committee produced a poster that said Jail Jackson. Michael Jackson was a captain on Bloody Sunday.

His career afterwards rose like a rocket. Eventually he was appointed Chief of the General Staff—number one soldier, right at the very top.

What he did on Bloody Sunday was to cover up murder and to tell lies about it. And he lied when he gave evidence at the Saville tribunal in London.

Saville rightly exonerated all the dead and the wounded. But Saville also exonerated Jackson, and that was part of the cover-up too.

It was a triumph that the dead were declared innocent. But that doesn't detract from the fact that it was based upon exonerating the British Army.

What Bloody Sunday illustrates is the way in which the state can murder its own. Bloody Sunday shows that the class which rules over us is rotten to the core.”

For more, go to pbp.ie and bloodydaysundaymarch.org

READ MORE

● **War in an Irish Town** by Eamonn McCann £10.99

● **What happened in Derry** A 1972 Socialist Worker pamphlet by Eamonn McCann bit.ly/Mccannpamphlet

● **The Cain archive has a large collection of material about Bloody Sunday** to read bit.ly/cainarchive

Books available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



How capitalist competition threatens new Ukraine war

As the West and Russia vie for dominance in eastern Europe, our job is to fight the system that drives them, says **Tomáš Tengely-Evans**

RIVALRY BETWEEN the US and Russia threatens a devastating war in Ukraine for the second time in less than a decade.

Russian president Vladimir Putin has amassed 100,000 troops along Ukraine's border.

While the US remains the world's strongest imperialist power, it is weakened and Putin hopes a military build-up will force it to the negotiating table.

He wants president Joe Biden to make assurances that the US's military alliance Nato won't expand any further eastwards.

Biden has ruled out military action in Ukraine, but is determined to maintain US dominance against Russia.

While neither side wants a prolonged war, it could easily happen.

That's because the Ukraine crisis is a product of imperialism—a global system driven forward by competition between the big capitalist states.

Spark

When tensions run high, a small spark can set off a wider war.

Ukraine is at the centre of a much bigger site of imperialist rivalry between the US and Russia and many other regional powers. This fault line starts in northern Europe on the border between Russia and the Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.

From here, it cuts down into Ukraine, goes through the oil-rich Caucasus region on Russia's southern tip, and then extends into central Asia.

Tensions are rising right along it. The US is determined to defend its position in the world while other states see its relative decline as an opportunity to jockey for position. US imperialism's defeat in Iraq signalled it

RUSSIAN PARATROOPERS head for drills near Ukraine

was possible for weaker powers to assert their interests against US wishes. Russia is one such power.

In 1991 the Soviet Union split apart into Russia and 14 other republics along its borders, including Ukraine.

For much of the 1990s, it was a shadow of its former power.

But a combination of high oil prices and Vladimir Putin's iron hand strengthened the Russian state. It began asserting its imperialist interests in what it calls its “near abroad”, the republics that used to be part of the Soviet Union.

Ukraine—industrially developed, and a buffer between the West—was one of the most important.

After the Cold War, the US broke its pledge not to expand Nato into eastern Europe.

In 2008 Nato agreed that Ukraine and Georgia should join. Russia invaded Georgia to prevent this happening.

There's also an economic side to the rivalry. The European Union (EU)—a wannabe imperial power aligned with the US—tried

to get Ukraine to join it in 2014. Russia had set up the Eurasian Customs Union (ECU) to compete with the EU and strengthen its hand against China in central Asia.

In 2014, Ukraine looked to align more closely with the West. In response, Russia took over the Crimea region from Ukraine and supported separatist militia in the south east. This conflict rumbled on since and has now flared up again.

How should socialists respond? Firstly, we should have no truck with US or British hypocritical claims to protect Ukraine from Russian aggression.

How should socialists respond? Firstly, we should have no truck with US or British hypocritical claims to protect Ukraine from Russian aggression.

Hatred

The revolutionary Vladimir Lenin argued that “in every country preference should be given to the struggle against the chauvinism of the particular country, to awakening hatred of one's own government”.

So, in the West, socialists' main job is to unite around opposition to our ruling class's drive to war.

Second, this doesn't mean that “my enemies' enemy is my friend”—that the West's rivals are in any way anti-imperialist. As Lenin went on to say, socialists also had to “appeal to the solidarity of the workers of the warring countries, to their joint civil war” against the warmongers' system.

We build opposition to our own rulers—but as part of a struggle against the system of imperialist rivalries that causes war.

“While neither side wants a prolonged war, it could easily happen”

Anti-vax marches—warning from the right

TENS OF thousands of people marched against vaccines in central London on Saturday—and they were joined by hundreds more in other towns and cities across Britain.

The demonstrations built on previous protests by the conspiracy-driven movement that has consistently mobilised large numbers of people.

But now the movement's organisers hope to latch on to health workers that face losing their jobs for being unvaccinated (see pages 4&5).

As with previous demonstrations, the march on Saturday brought together people representing a spectrum of anti-lockdown and anti-vaccination ideas.

It includes an element of people frustrated or hit hard by lockdowns, including small business owners and some workers. It also included people sceptical or unconvinced about the safety and effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccine—and those who believe it is some sort of conspiracy.

In both cases, the trajectory was to the right.

Far from a fringe element, those pushing “harder” conspiratorial ideas, often rooted in antisemitism, are at the core.

And although the demonstrations are not a fascist movement, they are places where a variety far right



PROTESTING IN London on Saturday. The anti-vax movement is trying to tap into anger at mandatory jabs for NHS workers (see pages 4&5)

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

groups are tolerated and even welcomed.

The most significant difference on Saturday's march was the organised presence of some health workers.

A group called NHS 100k organised a large feeder march of people in specially-produced blue hoodies.

Most appeared to be genuine health workers and their families or supporters.

Many carried homemade placards demanding freedom of choice and informed consent, and emphasising the threat to jobs and the NHS, rather than advancing conspiracy theories.

Some even declared they'd had

the vaccine themselves, but were against it being imposed on others.

But the main march's organisers used the health workers to give the movement a stronger sense of respectability and legitimacy.

They encouraged those in blue hoodies to lead the demonstration chanting, “Save our jobs.”

The “harder” element among the

marchers linked vaccine mandates to their own conspiracy theories.

And the NHS100k website, where the health workers on the march bought their blue hoodies, casts doubt on the effectiveness of the vaccine and promotes false anti-mask “research.”

Demanding

It provides a model email to send to trade unions demanding to know what they are doing to oppose vaccine mandates.

And it encourages its supporters to join the right wing English Workers Union, which is run by the leader of the far right English Democrats party.

Clearly, the right hopes to build on frustration and disillusion among some health workers at the major unions for failing to oppose sackings of unvaccinated health workers.

In the same way, the anti-vaccination demonstrations have established a large following in a vacuum left by trade union leaders, the Labour Party and the left.

When there has been so little opposition to the Tories—few strikes and even fewer demonstrations—the anger at Johnson finds other outlets.

The danger is—particularly among health workers currently—that these are paths to the right.

**JOIN THE
SOCIALIST
WORKERS
PARTY**

- ☐ Yes, I'd like to be a member
☐ I'd like more information and to receive emails

Name
Address
Postcode
Phone
Email

Return to SWP membership department,
PO Box 74955 London E16 9EJ.
Or scan this QR code on your phone
Phone 020 7840 5602
Email membership@swp.org.uk



Subscribe to Socialist Worker

Have Socialist Worker delivered with your post every week for a direct debit of £5 a month

I want to subscribe to Socialist Worker with a monthly direct debit of £5

Name

Address

Postcode

E-mail

Phone

I would like ____ extra papers to sell
(this will not be deducted from my bank account)

For official use only—this is not part of the instructions to your bank/building society

Sherborne Publications,
PO Box 74955 London E16 9EJ

Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by direct debit

Originator identification no. 9 7 3 3 5 5

Our reference no.

1. Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

To the manager:

Bank/building society

Address

Postcode

2. Name(s) of account holder(s)

3. Branch sort code

4. Bank/building society account no.

5. Instruction to your bank or building society

Please pay Sherborne Publications direct debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the direct debit guarantee.

I understand that this instruction may remain with Sherborne Publications and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account

Direct Debit guarantee

■ This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.

■ If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Sherborne Publications will notify you ten working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Sherborne Publications to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.

■ If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by Sherborne Publications or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.

■ If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Sherborne Publications asks you to.

■ You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

Socialist Worker Subscriptions

Post PO Box 74955 London E16 9EJ

Phone 020 7840 5601

Web www.socialistworker.co.uk

'We can't stand for this'— delivery workers speak out

Food delivery drivers are angry about their low pay and bad treatment.
Sophie Squire spoke to workers striking and fighting back against greedy bosses

LONG days, low pay and harsh conditions await delivery workers employed by apps such as Deliveroo, Just Eat, Uber Eats and Stuart.

But workers are fighting back for a better deal.

An impressive strike of Just Eat delivery workers, recently outsourced to subcontractor Stuart, has spread from Sheffield to Chesterfield, Sunderland, Huddersfield and Blackpool.

Workers, who are members of the IWGB union, sprung to action after Stuart cut workers' wages from £4.50 to £3.40 per trip for short journeys.

Sayed is one of the drivers who took part in strikes in Chesterfield.

He told Socialist Worker that cuts to pay will have a devastating impact on workers.

"The new pay structure is a massive blow for us. The price of fuel and insurance is going up, and our general expenditure is increasing," Sayed explained.

"It's really hard to make money at the moment. Sometimes it doesn't even feel worth it."

Ahmed is also a delivery driver in Chesterfield. He said that Stuart told workers the pay deduction was a "fairer deal for everyone". But Ahmed is already seeing a drastic reduction in his pay.

"Before, if you did say 22 deliveries a day, you'd usually get around £100 and a small bonus of maybe £10 or £20," he explained. "Nowadays, for the same amount of orders we don't reach £100."

Ahmed added that additional costs that aren't covered by Just Eat Stuart also decreases workers' wages.

"Because of long waiting times,



IWGB UNION members protesting outside Hackney Town Hall in east London

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

you can only do about two jobs an hour. If you're lucky, that's £7 an hour," he said.

"Then you have to factor in other costs like petrol and insurance and you're looking at making much less.

"And you aren't paid for the time it takes to drive to where you need to pick up the order. Only the time it takes to drop it off with the customer.

"Because of the low pay you have to work longer hours. I know other drivers who get up at 7 am and finish at 11 pm.

"You can't have a life with this job."

Both Ahmed and Sayed agreed that despite Just Eat, Stuart and other delivery apps tell workers they are "self-employed", but that this isn't the case.

"The fact is the delivery companies are in complete charge of us," Ahmed argued.

"They can do whatever they like—they can dock our pay and dismiss us at any time.

"You can't get in touch with the company if you have problems.

"There is a support chat but it's an automated bot, and you can't speak to a real person who will understand."

The pay cuts were a final straw for many food delivery workers already angry and keen to keep on fighting.

"In Chesterfield, we made the case to other drivers that if we struck and took action together then we would all benefit," said Sayed.

For the time being the strikes in Chesterfield have stopped, but Ahmed said workers need to keep up the pressure and keep fighting.

"Delivery drivers are the ones who make Just Eat and Stuart money. We can't stand for this anymore, and we just can't take it."

How do workers fight back?

THE demand for food delivery services only increased during the pandemic. But this didn't amount to a surge in profits.

Last year food delivery app Just Eat reported that they had received 1.1 billion orders.

In the first six months of 2021, Deliveroo reported that orders had doubled from 74.5 million to 148.8 million.

These companies make millions, if not billions, in revenue every year yet struggle to make profit.

So, bosses look to



Riders on strike last year

squeeze workers as much as possible.

Last year Deliveroo made a loss of £104.8 million, and at the beginning of the pandemic its sales slumped.

Bosses tried to save the company by sacking 15 percent of its office staff—some 367 people.

But how can workers fight and win against such unscrupulous companies?

Workers striking in Sheffield, Chesterfield and elsewhere showed that withdrawing their labour, even from one restaurant, can stop deliveries altogether.

Spreading and escalating strikes across the country would put immense pressure on the bosses to bow to workers' demands.

But to make action even more successful and long-lasting, there must be stronger links between workers and their chosen union.

The more drivers that can be recruited to unions, the more collective power the workers will have.

Battling McDonald's for a free and safe place to park

IN DALSTON, east London, delivery riders aren't asking for much—just a safe space to park while they collect orders from the local McDonald's.

Delivery driver Son told Socialist Worker that he and other workers are forced to park in Bentley Road car park, too far from the restaurant.

"You have to pay to park at the Bentley car park," he said. "It's £2 every time you need to park there, so every trip we take we have to pay an extra £2."

Riders are fighting to get permission to park in the car park behind the McDonald's, which is usually empty.

"If you park in the wrong place, you can be fined over £60," said Son. "That's more than some of us earn in a day."

Shelter

Ed, who organises couriers for the IWGB union, told Socialist Worker that workers are demanding a place to wait for orders that has "shelter, toilets and is safe."

"This is just another assault on couriers, who are mainly black, Asian and migrant workers. Already they get no sick or holiday pay, and no support from the food delivery apps," Ed added.

Hackney's Labour council has so far refused to address the workers' grievances.

It has said that couriers must take the issue up with the delivery apps they work for.

To show the council that workers will keep fighting for a safe space to park, drivers on

bikes and motorcycles took to protest.

They rode from Ashwin Street to Hackney Town Hall last Thursday and made sure they were noticed.

Workers blared their horns and circled the town hall.

Exploiting

When they arrived at the town hall they chanted, "Stop exploiting us", "We want dignity" and "Hackney council—shame on you".

On the steps of the building, workers

demand that the council stop handing out fines to workers who are already so poorly paid.

Son said that taking part in actions, like the protest last Thursday, make delivery workers feel less isolated.

"When we rode into the square, it felt really good. It was good to see the support from local people as well.

"We need to keep putting the pressure on to open up the space behind McDonald's for riders."

IN BRIEF

Strike threat gets results on pay

VEHICLE technicians at Mercedes Benz Retail Group have won a 13 percent pay increase for 2022 after threatening strikes. Bosses previously offered no pay rise—effectively a pay cut.

The 185 Unite union members had planned four days of strikes this week before accepting the offer.

Workers show true grit to get new offer

WORKERS THAT grit roads in Carmarthenshire have suspended strikes after council bosses made a new offer. The gritters struck for two days earlier this month over bad treatment by bosses.

Hospital cleaners hold off action

SECURITY GUARDS at Great Ormond Street Hospital in central London suspended strikes last week after members of the hospital's boards announced improvements to terms and conditions.

Members of the UVW union want to be brought in house and receive the same benefits as staff directly employed by the NHS.

Workers say if they don't receive a clear proposal from the hospital, they will strike for six weeks from Wednesday of next week.

Protesters support scaffolders' fight

SUPPORTERS OF the Scunthorpe scaffolders in their pay dispute protested on Monday.

The scaffolders are employed by Actavo. They were set to begin a continuous strike from Wednesday of this week.

The workers are being paid up to 15 percent below the nationally agreed rate for the job. One Unite member, Dayne, told Socialist Worker, "We're putting our message across that we're not happy with what they are doing."

"All the other companies on the site are getting paid the rate that we want."

He added, "We'll be escalating things a bit more this time."

"We got a lot of support off a lot of people, but standing there waving a flag wasn't getting the message across."

Coalition to fight cuts in Wirral

WIRRAL COUNCIL has proposed £19 million of cuts to services. It is set to make its final decision on 28 February.

Wirral trades council, and public sector unions are preparing opposition. A grassroots organisation Wirral Needs Action is also spearheading a broad campaign of activists to fight back.

Norman Meddle

EDUCATION



EQUAL PAY and workload—two of the 'four fights'

Don't let leaders divide the university disputes

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

UNIVERSITY workers will head to picket lines in the next few months, with strike dates set to be announced in the coming weeks.

The members of the UCU union took three days of strikes last year over two linked disputes. These are pension cuts, and the "four fights"—pay, workload, contracts and equalities.

After the strikes many said the best way to win was to escalate. That mood was reflected in ballot results last week which saw twelve new branches joining the fight.

Yet UCU's leadership is

out of step with this. At a recent meeting of its Higher Education Committee the leadership indicated it wants to separate the two disputes.

Members of the union had already fought against this in November, rightfully arguing it would weaken the fight.

Members of the UCU Left group, which Socialist Worker supports, put forward a motion at a meeting of branch delegates the day before. It called for simultaneous action in both disputes as soon as possible.

The motion was broadly backed by the delegates but ignored by the union's leadership.

Instead different forms of

action taken at different times for the two disputes were proposed. It was also unclear when strikes over the four fights would begin.

The decoupling of the disputes could undermine damage the solidarity and unity that has developed between workers, because the disputes have been fought together. The best way to win against the university bosses is for university workers to strike together and for as long as it takes to win. Strike dates should be called immediately.

Rank and file members must force those at the top of the union to listen to how workers want to fight this dispute—and be ready to challenge them.

ACADEMIES

Determined fights to beat back academisation plans

WORKERS AT Newham Sixth Form College (NewVic) in east London were upbeat as they completed their ninth day of strikes last week. They began another three-day strike on Tuesday.

Members of the NEU union are fighting over unfair management practices, workload and plans to turn the college into an academy.

Striker Jas told Socialist Worker that he believes the academisation threats are because "management are in it for themselves".

"We need something inclusive and an academy will deprive people of that option," he added.

●Messages of support to Rob Behan at redirob@gmail.com

■WORKERS AT St Matthew's Church of England Primary school in Preston workers have completed nine days of strikes against academy plans.

The members of the NEU union are set to strike again for three more days from Tuesday of next week—the day the academisation begins.

Over 40 of the 65 workers have struck holding picket lines on the school gate and outside academy trust Cidari's headquarters in Blackburn. **Sam Ord**

●Messages of support to NEU rep Julie Copeland at juliecopeland1000@gmail.com

SCHOOLS ROUND-UP

■TEACHERS AT Abbots Hill School in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire struck for two days over pensions and against the threat of fire and rehire.

NEU and NASUWT union members were set to walk out again on Tuesday and Thursday of this week.

Teachers are angry at the school governors for removing their pension scheme and using fire and rehire tactics to achieve it.

■TEACHERS AT Gordano School in Portishead, Somerset, are set to strike from Thursday of next week over workload after an overwhelming vote for action.

NEU union regional officer Ian McCann said the workload level is "having a detrimental effect on our members' welfare".

●Messages of solidarity to ian.mccann@neu.org.uk

TRANSPORT

Train cleaners across Britain fight for fair pay

OUTSOURCED train cleaners employed by Atalian Servest Limited are taking to picket lines in widespread strikes for fair pay.

Despite working throughout the Covid-19 pandemic many receive just £9.68 an hour and have no sick pay.

So far only workers outside of London have been offered a measly pay rise of 2p an hour. Bosses refuse their demands for £9.90 an hour.

Workers held picket lines between Thursday and Saturday in several towns and cities including Carlisle, Liverpool and Wembley, north London.

Strikers know there is money for pay. Their union the RMT, revealed that the company paid £10.8 million to its parent company last year.

This money would be able to give 300 cleaners £15 an hour three times over.

Another pay battle among hundreds of cleaners is brewing across the south east of England.

Workers on four separate services provided by outsourcing company Churchill are balloting.

The cleaners work on Thameslink, Southern, Great Northern, Southeastern, High Speed 1 and Eurostar services.

Many of the cleaners are paid only £8.91 per hour. But Churchill paid a £12 million dividend last year which would be enough to rise all wages to £15 per hour.

"We're having to literally fight with them when they could easily give a pay rise to us," Churchill cleaner Bella told Socialist Worker.

"It comes from pure greed and they've got away with it for so long. Attacking our terms and conditions, keeping us on minimum wage and minimum everything, including uniform standards."

Alongside pay Churchill cleaners are fighting for free transport, "It's the guys in London I feel sorry for", said Bella. "A lot of them are paying about £240 a month just to get to work."

LONDON UNDERGROUND

Hit hard to win on Tube

WORKERS ON the London Underground have begun a work to rule against attacks on jobs, pensions and working arrangements.

Yet the workers—members of the RMT—voted by 94 percent to strike in a ballot that ended earlier in January.

Bosses want to make workers pay for the fall in income from passengers during the pandemic.

The workers showed clearly they're ready to strike.

RMT should call strike dates immediately.

■THE RMT union has written to London mayor Sadiq Khan over suggestions that strikes could have forced a retreat over Night Tube working. Members of the RMT union are striking every weekend against plans to make every worker take at least one Night Tube shift a year.

Yet at a London Assembly committee, deputy mayor Seb Dance said, "It is not the case that drivers will have to work a night shift." Strikes should not be suspended until the attacks are fully withdrawn.

BUSES ROUND-UP

BUS DRIVERS employed by First Manchester have returned to picket lines in a dispute over pay.

Over 300 workers struck on Thursday of last week and Monday and Wednesday of this week. They are set to strike again on several dates throughout February.

The members of the Unite union are fighting after bosses refused to backdate any pay increase to August 2021.

August is the month when the annual pay increase was due.

Unite branch secretary Sohail told Socialist Worker, "We've not had a pay rise for the last couple of years. Even the pay rises we are getting are so low they don't cover our household bills."

■MORE THAN 360 workers at Stagecoach bus depots in Bristol, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Stroud, Coalway, and Ross-on-Wye could strike over pay.

A strike ballot began on Tuesday of this week and is set to end on Thursday 10 February.

■MANCHESTER bus driver Tracey Scholes is celebrating victory following a campaign in her defence.

Changes to the busses left five foot tall Tracey unable to reach the pedals when looking in the mirrors.

Bosses at Go North West threatened her with reduced hours or the sack.

But after protests, they backed down and agreed to protect her hours and pay.

PACKAGING AND LOGISTICS

'If we can fight, so can you'—Chep UK

by BARRY CONWAY

SOLIDARITY HAS boosted Chep UK pallet workers in Trafford, Greater Manchester, who are on all-out strike for higher pay.

Delegates from nearby Wigan trades union council visited the Unite union members' picket lines last week.

The workers are demanding a 5 percent pay increase from bosses—who announced £150 million worth of profits during the pandemic.

One worker said, "We were told during the past year that we were on the front line of the pandemic."

"They said that the business would suffer if we didn't go all out to ensure we supplied the equipment needed to clients."

Committed

"They said we would be rewarded for our efforts. They then offer 2 percent at the same time as announcing £150 million profits."

Another striker added, "All they do now is offer to negotiate—and then ask what we want when they know all too well what we want."

"That's not negotiation, that's stringing us along and taking the piss."

The Chep UK strike shows



SOLIDARITY ON the Chep UK picket line

PICTURE: MANCHESTER SWP

how working class people can realise their power through taking collective action.

"From my point of view this strike and the picket line has been an eye-opener," said another picket.

"Before I used to go to work, come home, watch telly, have a kip, maybe have a beer, get to sleep and go to work. I didn't really know anyone apart from the few I worked with."

"Now I'm mates with the workforce, got a wider view of things, meeting trade unionists from other areas,

reading different newspapers. It's a different world."

Another picket agreed, saying, "Life used to be a bit of a treadmill."

"Work, sleep, even hiding behind others who used to stick up for us. It's different for me now."

"I won't hide behind anyone, when I speak at meetings I feel confident."

"I can't believe the reception we get when talking to other trade unionists, when hundreds are clapping you."

"I know how important this picket is. We're telling

passers by if we can fight, so can you."

"They'll go into their own workplaces and say, 'Have you seen those Chep workers, why can't we do that?'"

As the cost of living crisis gets worse, Chep UK workers are saying, "Enough is enough."

Every trade unionist and campaigner should get behind the Chep UK fight, invite strikers to online and physical union meetings and raise money.

● Send messages of solidarity to @Unite_NorthWest on Twitter

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Glasgow workers could walk out again in equal pay battle

OVER 10,000 low paid workers at Glasgow City Council—and local authority-controlled Glasgow Life—could strike again in their long running equal pay fight.

In 2018, thousands of Unison, Unite and GMB union members struck for two days in Britain's largest equal pay strike for decades.

This industrial action brought £500m compensation payments to the predominantly low-paid women workers.

To resolve historic pay injustices, the Scottish National Party (SNP) run council also promised to bring in a new, fairer job evaluation scheme by 2021.

But unions fear that the council has been dragging its

feet in implementing the new pay scheme and is refusing further interim compensation payments.

Unison said, "It is unacceptable that workers are being expected to wait until at least 2024—six years after their initial payment—for the next step in addressing ongoing gender pay discrimination."

Meanwhile, this week campaigners celebrated the reopening of closed Glasgow Life-run libraries.

Despite this, many Glasgow Life venues remained closed and the council is looking into making further cuts.

Workers should vote yes to strikes—and everyone should support their struggle.

Jim Main

SCOTLAND

Anti-Tory march for indie

AROUND 800 protesters rallied in Glasgow's George Square last Saturday to demand Boris Johnson's resignation and Scottish independence.

The protesters marched to Glasgow Green, chanting, "Independence now," and, "Tory, Tory, Tory—out, out, out."

At the rally, various campaigners drew lessons from other struggles for the independence movement.

Fayrouz Kraish, an NHS worker and anti-racist activist, said frustration with Tory hypocrisy drove people to march.

"So many NHS staff put their lives on the line to save others," she explained.

"While people were doing that, Boris Johnson and his corrupt pals were partying and lying about it."

"People don't want what we have now. It's broken."

Stephen Ramsay

NHS

Fight for pay at Barts NHS

HUNDREDS OF cleaners, porters, and security, catering and reception staff are set to strike for two weeks at three hospitals in east London at the end of this month.

The Unite union members—employed by outsourcing giant Serco—are based at Barts, the Royal London and Whipps Cross hospitals.

They plan to walk out from next Monday in a pay dispute.

Workers voted in December last year by a whopping 97 percent to strike over an insulting 3 percent offer. They already take home some 15 percent lower pay

than they would if employed directly by the NHS. Barts Health must be forced to reemploy the Serco workers on NHS terms and conditions.

Strikers plan to rally on next Monday at 11am outside the Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Rd, E1 1FR

■ A NEW coalition of NHS campaign groups and trade unions has come together to demand a massive increase in health service funding.

The SOS NHS group is calling for a nationwide day of action on Saturday 26 February. Go to sosnhs.org

DISTRIBUTION

Wincanton strikers' protest targets 'Red Wall' Tory MP

UNITE UNION members at the Wincanton B&Q depot in Worsop are re-balloting so they can continue their all-out strike.

Union reps are very confident that workers will support the vote to extend the strike. The mood on

the picket line turned to anger when the local "Red Wall" Tory MP Brendan Clarke-Smith said strikers could save money by leaving the union. They have called a demonstration for 29th January from the depot to the MP's office.

REFUSE AND RECYCLING

Strikers in Eastbourne secure better pay deal

by KEITH CRANE

REFUSE LORRY drivers in Eastbourne, Sussex, ended their strikes last week after an improved pay offer from the council.

The GMB union members accepted it by majority vote in a show of hands.

A sizable minority of the striking drivers voted to reject the offer.

The offer is a staged pay increase worth around 11 percent this year. And it guarantees a minimum hourly rate of £13.50 by April next year.

The offer came on the sixth day of solid strikes by the drivers.

Attempts by managers to

take out the refuse lorries had been successfully blocked by well-attended pickets on successive strike days.

Describing the picket lines as "illegal", the Liberal Democrat-run council had adopted tough anti-union rhetoric.

But it folded when faced with unwavering strikes, which had support from the local community.

Loaders were in the process of balloting to join the strikes. They have stood down their action after also receiving an improved pay offer.

The strike also won promised improvements in the facilities provided for the workers.

COVENTRY

Coventry bin workers go 'all-out' in fight for pay

BIN WORKERS in Coventry have significantly escalated their strikes for higher pay.

The 70 Unite union members plan to strike from Monday to Friday of each week. This programme of industrial action is set to begin next Monday and continue until 23 March.

An overtime ban is already in place.

The picket line is still solid, despite the freezing weather. The constant tooting of horns is a sign of the support that the strikers have from passers by on the busy London Road.

This week strikes were set to take place on Wednesday and Friday.

Solidarity continues to pour in, including a donation of £4,500 from a local Unite

branch in the city. The strikers are determined to win higher pay.

Labour-run Coventry council previously claimed that the strikers earn over £50,000—in reality, their basic starting salary is just £22,183.

■ BIN WORKERS in Wiltshire will ballot for strikes after Hills Waste Solutions in Trowbridge, Salisbury and Calne offered them a tiny 2 percent pay increase. This would amount to a pay cut.

Tory-run Wiltshire council has refused to intervene, saying the dispute is between the outsourcer Hill Waste and the GMB union.

The ballot will open on 21 January and will close on 4 February.

BRITISH STATE BACKS MURDER IN YEMEN

by NICK CLARK

AIRSTRIKES BY a British-backed military killed more than 70 people—including at least three children—in Yemen last week.

The coalition, led by British ally Saudi Arabia, killed three children playing football in an airstrike on a telecommunications centre in Yemen's main port city Hodeidah.

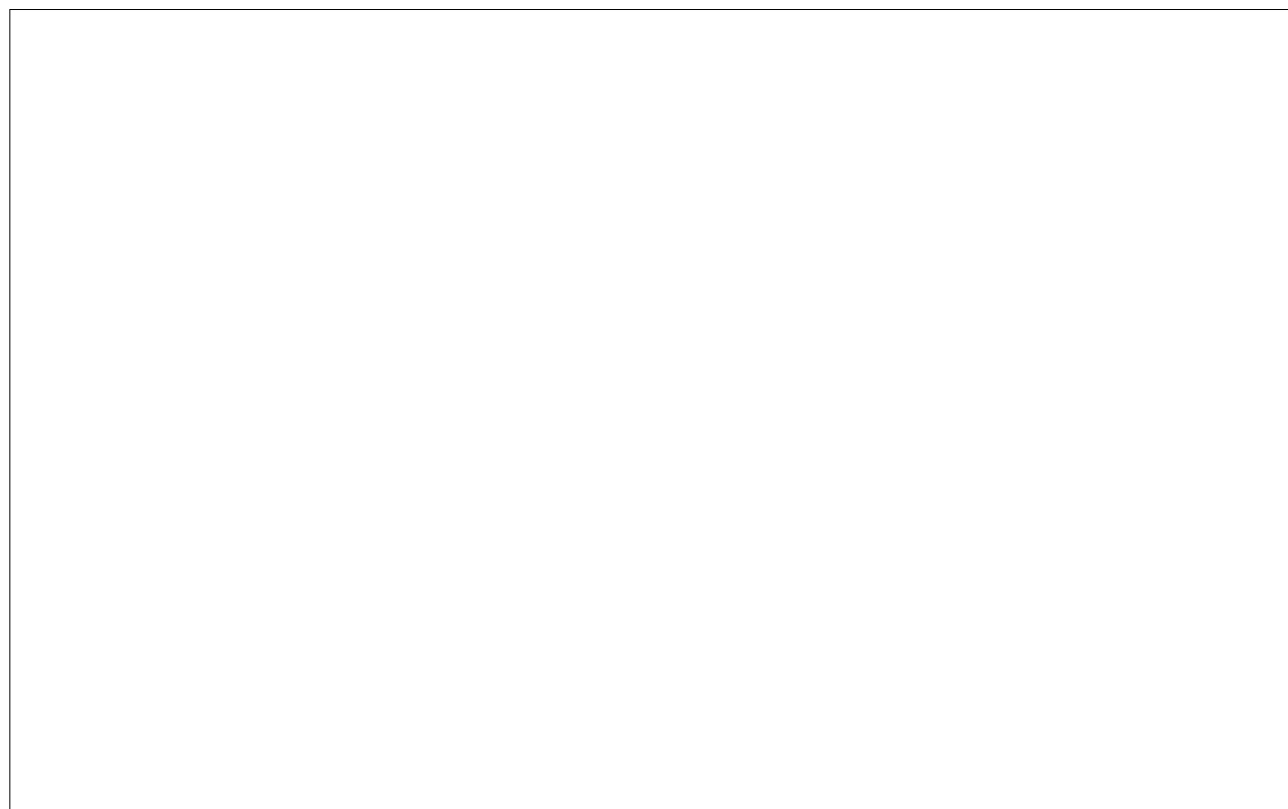
Another airstrike on a prison in the city of Sa'ada killed 70 people and wounded 138 people more.

The medical charity Doctors Without Borders reported that the airstrike left the local hospital "so overwhelmed that they can't take any more patients."

Meanwhile, the strike on the telecommunications buildings left most of Yemen without internet for several days.

It's a blow to the hundreds of thousands of people already suffering after more than seven years of war brought on them by the West's allies

Majid Abdullah, a resident of Yemen's capital Sanaa, said the internet outage left him unable to receive desperately



YEMENIS TRY to clear bomb damage in Sana'a after airstrikes last week by the Saudi-led coalition

needed money from relatives abroad.

"I don't know what to do. We eat and drink from the money sent by expatriates abroad," he said.

The airstrikes come after the rebel Houthi movement, launched a rocket attack on the United Arab Emirates, which is part of the Saudi coalition.

Saudi Arabia began the war on Yemen after a Houthi uprising in 2015.

The Houthis are backed by Iran—Saudi Arabia's and the West's regional rival—and

control much of the west of Yemen including Hodeidah and the capital Sanaa.

The coalition's blockade on Hodeidah has pushed millions of people in Yemen

into starvation. The World Food Programme warned last September that five million people in Yemen were on the brink of famine and 16 million people were "marching towards starvation."

Saudi-led airstrikes have also killed more than 100,000 people including at least 12,000 civilians.

It is armed in part by Britain, which has sold it more than £20 billion worth of military equipment since its war began in 2015.

The Tory government was forced to pause arms sales to Saudi Arabia briefly in 2019.

A high court ruling said that sales were unlawful because the government hadn't assessed whether previous sales had been used in breaches of humanitarian law.

Yet just months later, top Tory Liz Truss—then trade minister—resumed sales once again.

That means Saudi Arabia and its allies can keep bombing Yemen—and keep killing children—with the support of Britain.

More on line
For more on Yemen, go to www.socialistworker.co.uk

US and Russian troops preparing for war in Ukraine stand-off

SABRE-rattling between US and Russian imperialism had brought Ukraine to the brink of war, as Socialist Worker went to press on Tuesday.

US secretary of state Anthony Blinken promised a "swift, severe and united response from the United States and Europe" if Russia invaded Ukraine.

President Joe Biden could send between 2,000 to 5,000 troops to countries bordering Russia and Ukraine.

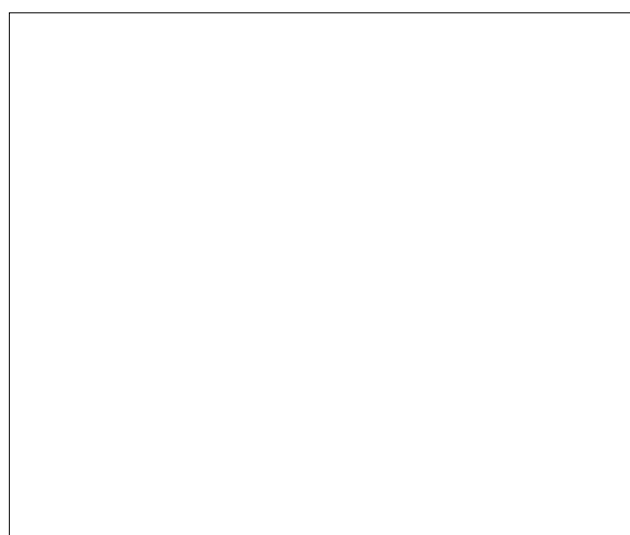
This could increase to 50,000, backed up by aircraft and warships, under a senior generals' plan presented to

the president last weekend. The US and British governments both continued to ship arms to Ukraine during the last week.

And Tory minister Dominic Raab claimed that British spooks had unmasked a Russian plot to stage a coup and install an obscure former MP as the Ukrainian prime minister.

Russian president Vladimir Putin has placed more than 100,000 troops along the Ukrainian border since November of last year.

Armoured divisions are now within



A Ukrainian soldier works on his tank in the Lugansk region

striking distance of the capital Kiev, with a population of almost three million people.

Putin has been building up troops since November last year, in a bid to force the US to the negotiating table.

He wants assurances that the US-led Nato alliance won't expand eastwards (see page 15).

He can also see an opportunity to exploit divisions within the webs of Western imperialism.

The US has talked up the threat of an invasion in a bid to put Russia on the front foot.

But European

capitalist states—such as Germany—are far more reliant on Russian energy and have been less bellicose.

The US and Russia don't want to get bogged down in a long war—but that doesn't mean it won't break out. The logic of imperialism—a system driven by competition between capitalist states—can push states into direct confrontation.

In Britain socialists should build opposition to the US and British states beating the drums of war—and fight the system of imperialist rivalry that produces it.